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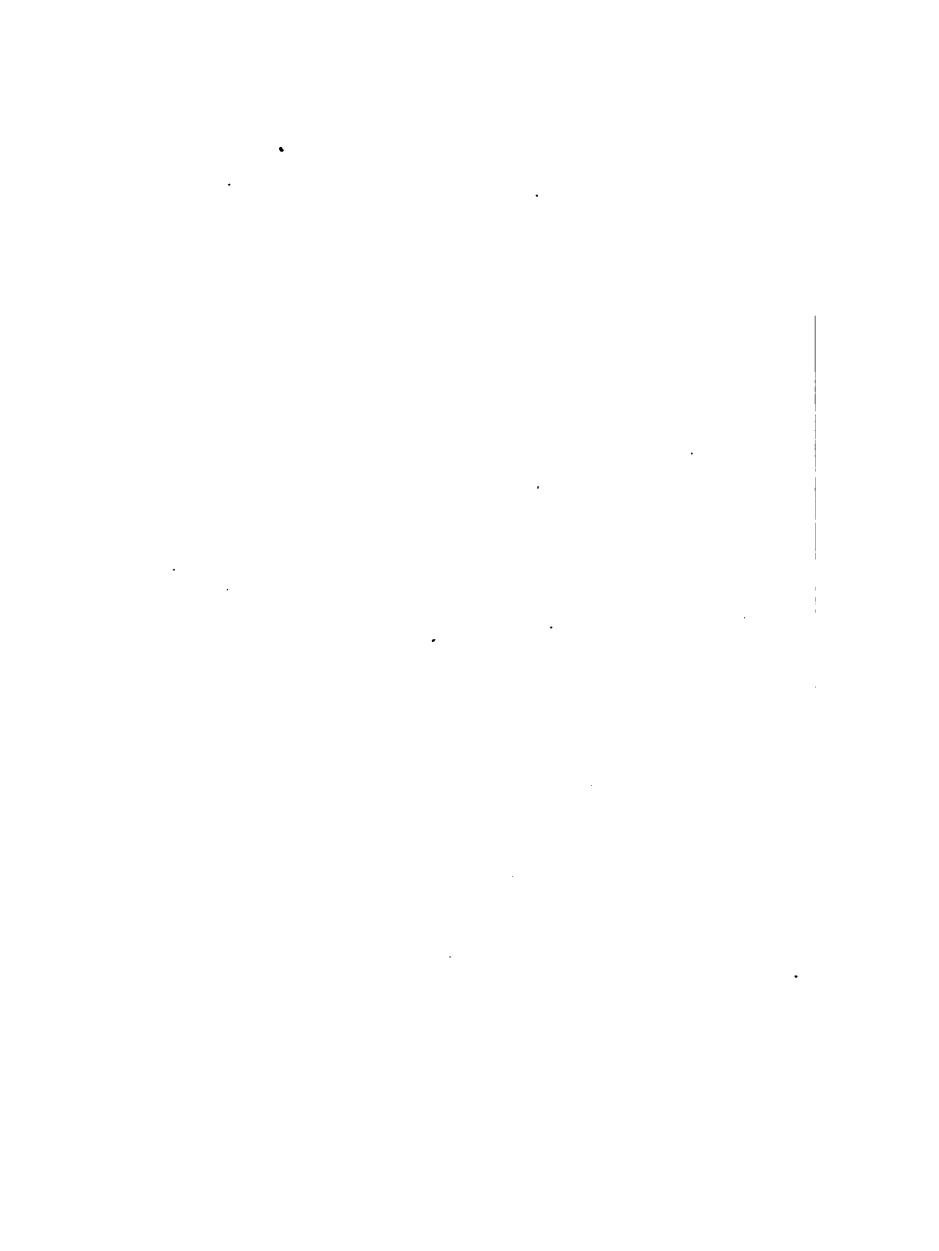
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“No, no, you must not have it. Look at it; see what a large one it is.”—Page 2.

HILDA AND HILDEBRAND.

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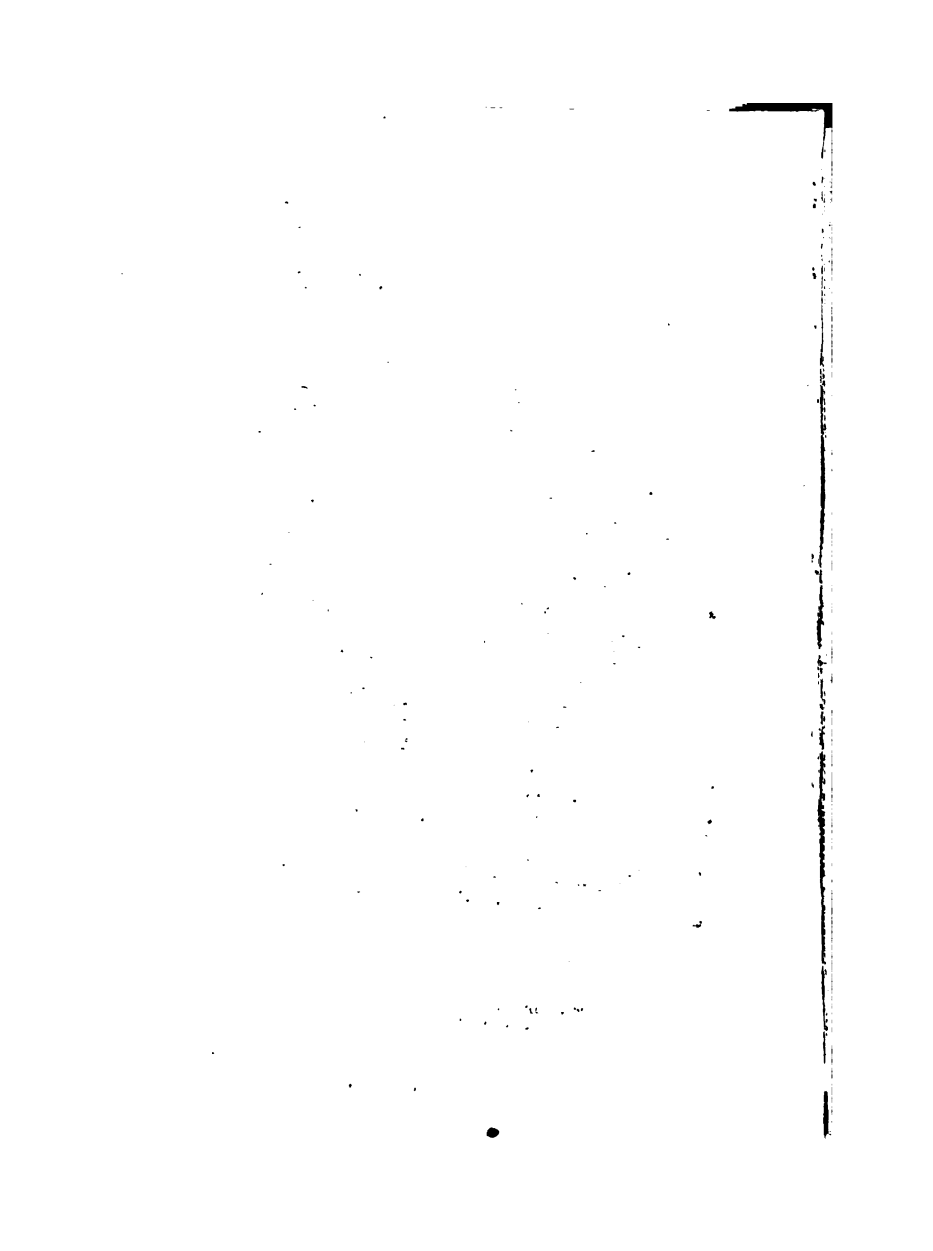
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# HILDA AND HILDEBRAND;

OR,

*The Twins of Ferndale Abbey.*

*A TALE FOR CHILDREN.*

BY

F. M. C. W.

"Put on the whole armour of God."

LONDON:

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DEDICATED

To my Mother,

IN LOVING REMEMBRANCE

OF THE

CHILDHOOD SHE MADE SO HAPPY.



## CHAPTER I.

"HILDA! Hilda! where are you? Come quickly," called out little Hildebrand. "I see the old postman coming up the avenue, and I want us to get the post-bag before John."

Half running, half walking, half jumping, and nearly tumbling, Hilda got down-stairs.

"My hat, my hat," she exclaimed. "Oh dear, I've left it in the nursery."

"Ne-ver mind your hat," said impatient Hildebrand; "here, put on my handkerchief," and tying it on her little curly head in a very funny sort of knot, off the two ran.

Trotter the postman was getting old, and he was always very glad when the children came to meet him, and saved him a little bit of walking; but this morning he said he must go up to the house, for he had a large letter for papa, which would not go in the bag, and it would not do if it was dropped and got lost.

"But, Mr Trotter," said Hildebrand, "you

know I would not be so careless as to lose it, *do* let me have it."

"No, no, you must not have it; look at it"—and the old man stopped and showed it to them; "see what a large one it is."

The children looked at it very gravely; and Hilda read, for it was printed in great black letters,

**"O. H. M. S."**

"What does O. H. M. S. mean?" she asked.

"On Her Majesty's Service," answered Mr Trotter, raising his hat (for he was a good old man, who loved God, and his Queen and country); but Hilda and Hildebrand did not seem to understand. "It's from the Queen, dears, and maybe she is going to send your papa somewhere to fight for her."

"Oh, but I don't like that," said poor little Hilda, growing very red, and taking tight hold of her brother's hand (Hilda always did this when she wanted not to cry).

"Squeeze my hand hard," whispered Hildebrand, who saw the tears nearly coming; and aloud, "Never mind, dear, we will go with him, and fight too."

"Now, Mr Trotter, here we are at the front door; so give us the bag and the letter."

"Miss Hilda, you shall have the letter, hold it very carefully in both hands; and, little sir, you take the bag." Away the old postman walked, and into the dining-room went the children, where their papa and mamma were sitting at breakfast.

"O mamma! *such* a heavy bag this morning!" sighed Hildebrand, as he laid it on the table.

"And, O papa! *such* a large letter!" said Hilda, as she put it into her father's hands.

"Ah! I guess what this is," said great, tall papa, as he glanced at the O. H. M. S. letter; "but now, my little ones, take this leaf-full of strawberries to the nursery, and leave mamma and me alone whilst we read our letters."

Hilda and Hildebrand went to the door, but there they stood without opening it.

"My darlings," said mamma, "did you not hear what papa said?"

"Oh! mamma, mamma," cried out both the children at once, "is the Queen sending papa away to fight? Trotter says she is; and O mamma! may we all go with him?"



Before mamma, who Hilda noticed grew very white, could say anything, papa said, in that straight out voice of his, which Hilda and Hildebrand knew they must always listen to, "Go up stairs, dears, to Nursie, and when I want you I will call you."

In an instant they disappeared. As they were walking up-stairs Nursie heard them, and called out, "My little twinnies, where have you been? Come here quickly, it is time for you to come and put your rooms tidy."

Now, part of making the rooms tidy was to help Nurse to put the little white coverlets over the two beds. Hildebrand always helped to put on Hilda's, and Hilda, Hildebrand's; and there used to be such laughing and merry-making over this, for just when good, kind Nursie had got the counterpane in her two hands, and Hildebrand had the other end, and just when a good shaking had been given to it to take out all the wrinkles and creases, and it was going to be laid so nicely and straightly on the bed, the little rogue would give it such a twitch that it jumped nearly half off the bed.

"Dearie me," Nursie would say, "the thing is bewitched to behave in such a manner, hopping

about as if it was alive ! Come, let us try again." Then, just as Nurse had got it straight again, and was laying it down so carefully, another little twitch came, and off it flew, upon which Nurse gave a pull at the troublesome counterpane, and Hildebrand gave a pull, and then Nursie another, and so on, until Hildebrand, from laughing so much, got quite weak, and tumbled down on the floor. The moment Hildebrand fell, Nurse said she had gained the victory, and the coverlet was put tidily on the bed, and neither of the children allowed to touch it again. I forgot to say that each time the coverlet flew off the bed, Hilda used to scream almost with laughing, and gave little jumps of joy ; but, when the fun ended, she ran out of the room into the other, calling out, " Catch me who can," and Nursie and Hildebrand after her ; but Hilda generally got first into the room, and now the same game took place, only Hilda not being so strong as her brother, he used to put his arms round her waist, and gave great tugs at Hilda as she tugged at the counterpane. The twins thought this great fun, and enjoyed it immensely, but I am not so sure that Nurse did. She was older, you see, and had plenty to do

without amusing the children, but she was very kind and good, and loved seeing them enjoy themselves; and, next to their mamma and papa, I think Hilda and Hildebrand loved their dear nurse.

"Come dears," said Nurse, "after all this romping I must make you both tidy, and send you down to do your lessons with mamma. I think, if I am not very much mistaken, you will be hearing the silver whistle in a minute." Sure enough Nurse was right, for, just as she had finished speaking, there was heard a gentle, silvery wh-e-e-e-e-w.

When mamma wanted the children for their lessons, she made two whistles on the silver whistle, with about three minutes between each, so that, whatever they were doing, they had time to leave off, and either put the toy away or get made tidy before going down-stairs; and it would have done you good to see how the children always tried to be in the room where they did their lessons before the second whistle could be sounded. This time they just got down as mamma was raising the pretty little silver whistle to her lips.

"Ah! my darlings, here you are, come along quickly. Mamma and her little ones are always

so happy at working time." And Hilda and Hildebrand did look happy, with such bright beaming smiles on their faces, and such loving looks at mamma.

After the lessons were over, Nurse took them out for a good long walk. When they came in it was their dinner-time, and very hungry little people they were.

About six o'clock that evening Hilda and Hildebrand heard horses come trotting up the avenue, and you might almost have heard them in the village, about a mile away, calling out, "That's dear papa and mamma." They were quite right, it was their papa and mamma; and soon after they came into the house, the children were made happy by being sent for down-stairs to the library. Both papa and mamma looked sad and tired, but Hilda thought it was because they had been riding, and had ridden a great way, and Hildebrand thought how pretty and sweet our mamma looks in that long dress. After they had come into the room their papa placed Hilda on one knee and Hildebrand on the other, and then he said, "My little ones, I have something to talk to you about." What he had to say you shall hear in another chapter.

## CHAPTER II.

"O PAPA! O mamma! Is it about the Queen's letter?" asked both the children at once.

"Listen, and I will tell you," answered their father.

Hilda and Hildebrand's brown eyes grew very large, but they said nothing.

"Hildebrand, what am I?" asked papa suddenly.

"A soldier," answered the little boy proudly, "and I am going to be one too." "And so am I," said Hilda.

"You can't," whispered Hildebrand, bending towards her, "girls can't be soldiers."

"Ah! but they can though," said papa, smiling; "though not exactly as you and Hilda meant."

"How can girls be soldiers, papa?" asked Hildebrand—"do tell me."

"I will presently, but now I want to talk to you about something else."

"Yes, yes, about the letter," exclaimed the children eagerly.

"Yes, my little ones, it is about the letter."

"Trotter was right—the Queen is going to send me away." . . . "Then I don't like her," interrupted Hilda, her little face crimsoning all over, "she is an unkind, naughty woman—but you shan't go—I won't let you go," and the poor little girl, throwing her arms round her father's neck, buried her face on his shoulder, and sobbed.

Hildebrand said nothing, but it was hard work for him to keep from crying.

"Hilda," said papa, "listen to me, and don't cry. The Queen is neither naughty nor unkind; she is quite right, she wants a great many of her soldiers to go to a place a long way off from here, called India, to take care of some of her people there, and I am to go with them. It is such a funny country, quite different to this, and the people ride on elephants, and there are lots of monkeys and beautiful trees, and flowers and—

"Will mamma and Hilda and I go with you?" interrupted Hildebrand.

"Mamma will," said papa gravely, "but you, my boy, must stay at home to take care of Hilda."

"O mamma! O papa! how can we get on

without you ?" cried out both the children at once. "Do, do take us."

Their mamma said nothing—her face was hidden in her hands, but papa, after looking at her for a moment, said in the "straight out" voice—"My children, listen to me, and don't talk. It is right that mamma and I should go to India, and it is right that you should stay at home—so it *must* be done, and we must just try and be as happy about it as we can."

"But papa," said Hildebrand, "I did so want to go and help you to fight." "And I too," said Hilda.

"Shall I tell you something ?" answered papa. "Shall I tell you how both you and Hilda can be soldiers—ah, and fight too ?"

"What ! when I am so little, papa ? and Hilda a girl ?" asked Hildebrand, in great surprise.

At this moment what did mamma do, but go to the piano, open it, sit down, and playing upon it began singing, in that sweet voice which papa and the children so loved to hear, these words—

"Oft in sorrow and in woe ;

Onward, Christians—onward go.

Fight the fight—maintain the strife,

Strengthen'd with the Bread of Life.

"Let your drooping hearts be glad ;  
March, in heavenly armour clad ;  
Fight, nor think the battle long,  
Soon shall victory tune your song.

"Let not sorrow dim your eye,  
Soon shall every tear be dry ;  
Let not fear your course impede,  
Great your strength if great your need.

"Onward, then, in battle move,  
More than conquerors ye shall prove,  
Though opposed by many a foe,  
Christian soldiers, onward go !"

"That's it," said papa, smiling at mamma.  
"That's it, my darlings—you must be the soldiers  
of the Lord Jesus Christ. When you were quite  
little tinies, mamma and I gave you to Him."

"Then we don't belong to ourselves," said  
Hilda wonderingly. "But I don't understand  
it—please, papa, tell us how you gave us away."

"Did you give us both together ?" asked  
Hildebrand.

"Yes, my little dear ones," answered mamma.  
"We did. When you were wee, wee things,  
only a few hours old, papa came to me with you  
both in his arms, and kneeling down, prayed  
with me that our Father which is in Heaven  
would bless you both, and make you His own



children, and the servants and soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ."

"Did He hear you, mamma?" asked Hildebrand, in a low voice.

"Yes, we are sure He did," answered papa, "for He has promised that whatsoever we ask in His Son's name—the Lord Jesus Christ's name—we shall receive; also, that if we 'ask anything according to His will He will hear us.' And my children, it is His will that you should belong to Him. Then, added their father, "besides that, when you were older and stronger, we took you to church, to God's house, and Aunt Isabel and mamma, and Uncle Robert and I, promised God for you both—for you were too little to understand or speak then—that you would be the faithful soldiers and servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, and fight manfully under His banner, against sin, the world, and the devil."

"Papa," said Hildebrand, looking up into his face, "we *will* try to belong to the Lord Jesus, and be good soldiers. Won't we, Hilda?"

"Yes," answered Hilda earnestly, taking hold of her little brother's hand; "we *will*."

"O mamma! O papa! we *will* try; but who will help us when you are so far away?"

"God will, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, my darlings," said papa solemnly. "You must speak to Him many times in the day, just as you would to mamma and me, and you must ask Him to help you, never to forget that you belong to Him; and to keep you from angry tempers and cross words, and everything that is wrong and evil, and to put His Holy Spirit in you, so that you may grow like Jesus, and go to heaven by and by.

"Papa," said Hildebrand suddenly, getting off his father's knee and standing up in front of him, with his hands clasped behind his back, "don't you think Hilda and I had better go at once and ask God to make us good whilst you and mamma are away."

"I do, my little ones," said papa, smiling so kindly on them; and mamma got up, and putting her arms round them both, kissed them so fondly; but the children saw the tears standing in her eyes, although she was smiling very lovingly.

"Then come, Twinnie," said Hildebrand to Hilda; and hand in hand they marched out of the room, and down a passage, until they got to their own play-room, where all their toys and

bricks were scattered about. Pushing them away, so as to get a little clear space, Hildebrand knelt down, and Hilda with him. Still keeping hold of his sister's hand, he said these few words aloud, and Hilda repeated them after him.

#### HILDEBRAND'S PRAYER.

"O Lord God, my Twinnie and I are kneeling down here, because we want so very much to ask you, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, to make us good. We want so, oh so much, to be quite good all the time papa and mamma are in that far-off country, and we want to be faithful soldiers and fight well. Please, God, do teach us, for we are such very little children, only five years old ; and as you sent us to papa and mamma on the same day, we want to belong to you together, and do everything together. Hilda wants to belong to you just as much as I do. ('Yes,' said Hilda.) So please—please, God, make us pure and holy like Jesus."

Then after kissing one another, the twins jumped up, and went back to their father and mother.

"Do you know, little ones," said mamma, "it is your bed-time, and papa and I must go and

dress for dinner. Both go to the *yellow* drawer in the drawing-room, and take a *bon-bon* each out of the French box, and then come and say good-night."

What a wonderful drawer that yellow drawer was, and how Hilda and Hildebrand loved going to it. It was the middle drawer in a little cabinet, made of tortoise-shell, and it had two long golden-looking stripes in it, so the children called it the *yellow* drawer. In this drawer mamma kept some of her treasures. There was a little ivory acorn which unscrewed, and inside it was, cut out of ivory, a lovely set of nine-pins, —then there was a little box, made of a wood which Hilda loved, for it had such a nice smell, and mamma called it her sandle-wood box. Inside it were some letters, and wrapped up in pink paper two little brown flat curls, and on the papers were written Hilda and Hildebrand. Besides these, there were numbers of other funny things in the yellow drawer—shells, beads, some little pictures painted on ivory, some crystal balls, and last, but not least, the French box.

"Hildebrand," said Hilda, "if I open the box, you shall choose the *bon-bons*."

" Very well," said Hildebrand ; " be quick and open it, Twinnie."

Hilda took the box in her hand ; what a pretty one it was, all covered with bright flowers and pictures, and giving it a little squeeze in the very centre of a lovely blue forget-me-not, open it flew.

If it was pretty outside, it was, I am sure, still prettier inside ; the lid was lined with lovely blue paper, covered all over with gold stars ; and then the *bon-bons* ! They *were* " good-goods"—little fish made in chocolate, with silver fins and tails ; little sugar bees with wings that looked like gold ; a whole set of croquet things, the mallets made of different coloured tophy, the balls of something like glass, only pink and red and violet, and so good to eat ! and the hoops, of some very white looking stuff, which, when you bit it, was all full of juice.

Hildebrand chose a mallet for himself, and a bee for Hilda, but it took some little time before he quite made up his mind which to take. Hilda then closed the box, and put it back in its place. Hildebrand pushed in the yellow drawer, and away they went to wish papa and mamma good-night, say their prayers, and off to bed.

"Hilda," said Hildebrand, whilst Nursie was undressing them, "do you know what I'm thinking of?"

"No," replied Hilda. "Is it about papa and mamma going to the India place?"

"No," said Hildebrand.

"Is it about being soldiers?"

"No."

"Is it . . . . that you would like to change your mallet for my bee?"

"No, Twinnie, for you have bitten one wing, part of its tail, and—let me see—one eye off. No, no, that would not do."

"Is it about getting our hair washed to-morrow night, and how it hurts when the soap goes into our eyes, and the water up our nostrils"——

"Nostrils, Miss Hilda," said Nurse.

"Well, I mean nostrils."

Nurse was too busy turning down Hilda's bed to hear the second mistake.

"And into our ears, and"——

"Oh, please don't talk of it, Hilda," interrupted Hildebrand; "its *horrid*."

"Ah," said Nursie smiling, "you must bear it like a man, and not mind."

"Yes, nurse, like a soldier; but I was not thinking of that, Twinnie."

"Then, I can't guess," said Hilda.

"Well, come here, and I will tell you. I must whisper it, so bend your head down."

"No, no, Master Hildebrand," said Nurse gravely; "you must not whisper, darling, it's very rude. If you want your sister to know something Nursie must not hear, you must wait until you are alone together."

"It's nothing wrong, Nursie," said Hildebrand, looking at her steadily with his large brown eyes.

"No, dear; that I am sure it is not," said Nurse, kissing him; "but it's a rude habit to whisper, and would make me feel, if you did it, that you were always wanting me out of the room."

"But we don't ever want you out of the room, dear, dear Nursie!" exclaimed the children together; "so please don't go."

"I will say it out loud, Hilda. I was only wondering if we should stay here, all by ourselves, when papa and mamma are gone, or where shall we go to?"

"Oh, Hildebrand, I don't like it; I don't

want to be without mamma and papa," said poor little Hilda sobbing.

"No more do I," said Hildebrand; "I wish the Queen would send another great, large man instead of papa; but there is not another so tall and grand as our papa in all the world, I believe. O Nursie! we are very sorrowful twins to-night!" And the poor little boy and girl got on Nursie's knee, and laying their brown, curly heads on her kind bosom, cried and cried, until at last they fell fast asleep.

Then Nursie lifted them up one by one, and carried each to their little bed—laid them gently down—covered them over—kissed them—blessed them—and left them alone.

When mamma and papa went to say good-night to their darlings, there was a happy smile on both little faces, although their eyelashes were still wet; and mamma thought to herself, "I know God will bless and preserve our little Twins whilst we are away, so I must try and not be too unhappy."



### CHAPTER III.

THE Twins were awakened the next morning by the bright sun shining through the meadows, and streaming all over their little beds, and by the birds singing merrily in the trees; but they did not jump up as usual, and hide behind the door, and call out Boo-oo! in a great voice to startle poor Nurse, and make her give a hop and a jump as she came in with the can of water to pour over her little children in their bath.

No; they lay very quietly in bed,—Hilda in her little room, and Hildebrand in his.

“Oh!” thought Hilda to herself, “I know why the birds don’t seem to sing prettily this morning, nor the sun to shine nicely, and Miss Frances to look so stupid and fat,”—(Miss Frances was her favourite doll, a large wax one, with very blue eyes)—“it’s because our own darling mamma and papa are going away from us.” And when Nursie came to take Hilda up to dress her, the little girl only smiled very

sadly, and gave Nurse a quiet kiss, but did not speak a word.

Nurse saw her little darling was grave and unhappy, and, like a good, kind, old woman that she was, tried to make her laugh by telling her some of the funny little stories about Hildebrand and herself when they were teenie-tinies.

Whilst Hilda was putting on her shoes and stockings, Nurse went to see how Hildebrand was getting on, and found him very nearly dressed, all except one difficult button which he could not manage by himself. Nurse soon settled that matter for him, and after saying their prayers, and going to mamma's room to say good-morning to her, the twins went downstairs to their breakfast.

Susan had not yet brought the porridge in, nor the large jug of milk, so off Nurse went to see about it.

"O Hildebrand !" said Hilda, taking very tight hold of his hand, "all this morning I've had that nasty ball in my throat, and I don't know what to do, for I don't want to cry."

"Well, I've got it too ; but I am thinking of something which is helping to take it away, and I will tell you what it is, only you must not say

a word about it to any one. Do you promise, Hilda ?”

“ I *promise*,” said Hilda.

“ Well, my idea is this, Twinnie, that you and I write a letter to the Queen, asking her to send somebody else instead of our papa ; or do you think it would be better to go and see her ourselves ?”

Hilda thought for some time, and then came to the conclusion that it would be a good plan to write to the Queen, and take the letter themselves. “ But you don’t know where she lives, Hildebrand !”

“ Yes, I do. You know where the village is ?”

“ Yes, quite well.”

“ Then, don’t you remember one day when papa took us in the carriage, how, after we passed the village, we came to a great large town, and over the door of such a very beautiful house was painted on a big wooden thing, a lovely lady all in blue and gold, and a sort of shiny-looking crown on her head, all full of red pebbles ?”

“ Yes, I remember quite well.”

“ And papa said, ‘ Look at Queen Victoria !’

and so that's her house,—the Queen's house,—and we'll walk there, Twinnie,—you and I."

"Yes, that we will," said Hilda. "But it will be a good long walk."

"Never mind! I have got two pennies, and you have got two, so we can get something to eat, and perhaps be able to buy a horse or something to ride on."

"Two pennies would not buy a horse, Master Hildebrand," said Nursie, who came into the playroom at that moment, followed by Susan with their breakfast.

"Would a silver shilling buy one, Nursie?"

"No, dear; it would take a great many silver shillings."

Hilda and Hildebrand looked at each other, but said nothing.

"Come now, my dears, and eat your porridge before it all gets cold."

Hilda and Hildebrand walked to the table, and climbed up on their high chairs; and Hildebrand putting his hands together, said, "For what we are going to receive, God make us thankful. Amen."

"Now, dear," said Nursie, after pouring the milk over their porridge, "eat a good breakfast

and I will go and get mine," and away she went.

"Hilda!"—"Yes, Hildebrand?"—"Be quick and finish."

"But the porridge is so hot, it burns my mouth when I swallow it too fast."

"Then, look here. I will put some more milk on it for you;" and Hildebrand took hold of the jug so quickly, that a lot of the milk went with a great splash into Hilda's lap; this made Hilda give a jump and a start, over went her chair; she caught at the table-cloth to save herself; down went her plate of porridge, and there on the ground lay the chair, Hilda, and the plate of porridge.

"My darling little Twinnie, are you hurt?" screamed out Hildebrand, as he scrambled off his chair.

"No; not a bit," said Hilda; "but, oh, what a mess we have made!—*ach darch*—look here," cried out the poor little girl, in piteous tones, and when Hildebrand looked, he saw—what do you think? That in getting up from the floor, poor Hilda had put one foot right into the middle of the plate of porridge, and her shoe and stocking were in a terrible state; all porridgey and milky, and very uncomfortable.

"Oh, dear, what am I to do?" asked Hilda.

"You must hop to the door, Hilda, and I will help you up-stairs."

Papa, who was coming down-stairs at this instant, hearing a noise in the play-room, thought he would go and see what it was all about.

"O papa! papa!" said Hilda, "I'm so 'shamed, I don't know what to do."

"What *have* you been doing, my dear children? Not fighting, I hope? There's Hilda's chair on the floor—the table-cloth half off the table—the milk all spilt, and—can I believe my eyes?—a plate of porridge on the floor! And oh, dearie me! what will Nurse say? Hilda has put her foot in it!"

"It was my fault, papa; not Hilda's," said Hildebrand. "I poured the milk, by mistake, in her lap—and" —

"Well, never mind, my boy," interrupted papa. "You did not do it on purpose, and mistakes will happen sometimes; but I wish Nurse would come;" and papa rang the bell.

Soon both Nurse and Susan appeared, and to Hilda and Hildebrand's great delight, papa burst out laughing when he saw their faces of horror,

on his pointing to the floor and Hilda's foot. "Ah," said papa, as he left the room, "a pretty story I shall have to tell mamma of you this morning, you little impa."

"Oh, Miss Hilda," said Nurse, "How could you go."—"Now, Nurse," interrupted Hildebrand, "don't be cross. It was not Hilda's fault; and papa did not scold. So you must not"——

"Your papa has not got to change Miss Hilda's stockings and shoes," said Nurse. "Or wash up the floor," said Susan. "I'll help you, Susan," said Hildebrand. "And I'm so sorry," said Hilda.

"Well, then, we will forget and forgive," said Nursie, carrying Hilda away up-stairs, whilst Hildebrand finished his porridge, which had now got very cold. Nurse soon put Hilda all to rights, and gave her some bread and butter and milk, as she had lost all her porridge, and then left the two children to amuse themselves in the playroom.

"We must write our letter now, Hildebrand, must we not?"

"Yes; where shall we get some paper? May I pull this piece out of my copy-book, do you think?"

"Yes," said Hildebrand; "give it to me;" and he tore out two pages.

"Get me a pencil, Hilda, and you shall write if you like. You write better than me."

"But you must tell me what to say?"

Hilda knelt at a chair, with the pieces of paper on a book, and a pencil in her hand, waiting for Hildebrand to tell her what to say.

"How am I to begin to her, Twinnie?"

"My dear Mrs Queen," said Hildebrand promptly.

"But I can't get so much as that in the line," said Hilda; "and I want to write it nicely; for, you see, I never wrote to the Queen before."

"No more have I," said Hildebrand, "and it's rather a difficult thing; but it must be done, because, you see, we want so much to keep dear papa at home, and dear darling mamma too."

After a long time, the children wrote this letter between them:—

DEAR MRS QUEEN,—Will you be so very, very kind, as to send another soldier to the India monkey place, to fight, instead of papa, for mamma must go with him, and they are the only mamma and papa we have got, and we shall be so sad and lonely without them. Twinnie and I send our love, and a kiss to you, Queen, and to your little



boys and girls ; and don't, please, send papa to fight.—  
Your affectionate,

HILDEBRAND AND HILDA MONTGOMERY.

(It was a very funnily spelt letter, but I have written it down as they *meant* it to be.)

"There, I think that will do capitally. You have written it so well, Hilda. Now we must find a stamp and an envelope for it."

"I've got an old envelope, with a stamp on it," said Hilda.

"That will do capitally ; do bring it."

When Hilda brought it, Hildebrand squeezed the letter in, tied a little bit of string round the envelope, and was going to put it in his pocket, when Hilda said, "We must address it now," and taking it from him, wrote—

"To the Queen," on it, and "London" underneath.

"That will do now, and she is sure to get it," said Hildebrand happily.

"Look, look," said Hilda ; "there is old Mr Trotter coming up the avenue. Let us go and get the bag, and give him this letter to post."

As they ran down the avenue, papa and mamma, who were watching them from the

dining-room window, said one to the other, "I do wonder if there will be a letter to-day from Miss Sinclair, saying what day she will come."

Who Miss Sinclair was, I will tell you in another chapter.

When the children got up to old Trotter, they gave him their precious letter, and asked him if he would be sure to post it for them.

"Yes," said Mr Trotter, putting it into his pocket; "I will post it, and dears, there's another O. H. M. S. letter for papa?"

"Is there?" cried the children. "O Mr Trotter! our letter is to the Queen, asking her not to let papa go."

"Much notice she will take of it, my poor little dears; but never mind me," he added as he saw the twins staring at him when they heard what he said about their letter; "never mind me, but mind the bag, and take it straight to papa. The O. H. M. S. letter is inside this time."

"Mr Trotter," said Hilda, "do stay a moment, I want so much to know what you said about the Queen not noticing our letter."

"Yes, yes, I'll post it, dears," answered old Trotter, hurrying off, and not hearing, or pretending not to hear, what Hilda said.

Hilda and Hildebrand walked back so slowly, that their father, who was in a hurry to get the letters, sent John to take the bag from them.

As the twins passed the dining-room windows, their mamma signed to them to come and speak to her.

"Darlings, would you like to go with papa and me in the carriage; we are going to Marton to do some shopping,"

"Oh, how joyful!" exclaimed both the children. "Thank you, thank you, dear mamma."

"Then go, dears, at once and get dressed," said papa; "for the carriage will be here directly. Mamma, I shall ride, for if we all go inside the carriage, there will be no room for Miss Sinclair."

"Very well," said mamma; "but go along, Hilda and Hildebrand, and tell Nurse she is to go too, as I want her to help me in choosing some clothes for you."

"Hilda, who is Miss Sinclair, do you know?" asked Hildebrand, as they were walking up-stairs.

"I don't know—we will ask Nursie; or no, we will ask mamma when we are in the carriage."

"Twinnies, twinnies!" called out Nursie. "If

you don't make haste the carriage will come and go without you."

"Oh, but Nursie, you are to go too."

"Me? Are you sure, dear?"

"Yes, quite sure; mamma said so."

"Deary, dear, be quick and get ready. Master Hildebrand, take off your pinafore, and put on those shoes; and you, Miss Hilda, put on your hat and gloves, like a good little girl, whilst I go and dress."

"Nurse," said mamma, putting her head in at the door, "please put on Master Hildebrand's brown velvet knickerbocker suit, and Miss Hilda's black and white muslin dress, for I am going to have them photographed. And you too, Nurse, you are to be photographed, so put on your best black silk."


"Why, ma'am," said Nurse laughing, "you are never going to have my ugly old face put upon glass."

"Yes, I am, Nurse," said mamma; "and my own too."

"Yours is a lovely face, mamma," said Hildebrand indignantly.

"Ah, my pet," said mamma smiling, "every crow thinks its own bird the whitest."

"Mamma!" called out Hilda, "crows are black;" but mamma was gone.

"And so are your hands black, Twinnies," exclaimed Nurse. "I never saw such dirty little paws in my life; go at once and wash them." 

In a short time Hilda and Hildebrand were quite ready, and nurse was nearly so.

Ding-dong-ding went the door-bell, and when John opened the front door the carriage was there.

"Are you ready, chicks?" said mamma; "and are you ready, Nurse?"

"I am quite ready, ma'am, all but my spectacles," said Nurse; "and I cannot for the life of me find them anywhere."

"I've hunted and hunted and hunted, Nursie," said Hildebrand, "but I cannot find them."

"Never mind, dear, then; I must go without them."

"Why, Nurse," said Hilda, bursting out laughing, "put your hand up to your nose, and there you will feel them."

"Sure enough, Miss Hilda, there they are safe and sound. Thank you, my dear."

Into the carriage they all got—mamma first, then the children beside her, and Nursie beside the coachman.

Papa was in front, on his beautiful chestnut horse, called Redgauntlet. How Hilda and Hildebrand loved that fine horse, and wished they were as large as papa, so that they could ride also. What a lovely morning it was! How green and pretty the trees looked—how the birds sang, and how fast old Bruno, the great Newfoundland, ran beside the carriage!

At last they reached Marton, and Hilda and Hildebrand saw it was the same town where the Queen's house was, at least where the house was which Hildebrand thought must belong to the Queen.

What *do* you think happened? Why actually the carriage drove up to the door of the house with Queen Victoria in blue and gold hung over it.

Hilda and Hildebrand looked at one another. At last Hilda said, "Mamma, *is* this the Queen's house, and does she live here."

"No, dear," said mamma, smiling, "this is an inn; and as there are several inns in the town, this is called 'The Queen Victoria.' We are going to put the carriage up in the stables here, and the poor horses will get something to eat."

As mamma turned away to give some orders

to the coachman and speak to Nurse, Hildebrand whispered to Hilda, "Then we were all wrong; this is not the Queen's home after all." And Hilda whispered back again, "And somehow I think there's something wrong with our letter too."

"Now, children," said mamma, "come along, and be sure and tell me if you see papa; he promised to meet me at Wright the stationer's shop."

What a delightful shop Mr Wright's was; great packets of writing-paper and envelopes piled up in the window in the shape of a Tower of Babel, with two great sticks of red sealing-wax, almost as long as papa's sword, laid across the top; then there were books with such lovely covers, old people's books, and middle-aged people's books, and young people's books, and little people's books; and there were beautiful golden inkstands, and writings-desks, and paint-boxes, and drawing-slates, and pens, and pencils, and heaps and heaps of other things, too many and too pretty for me to remember.

Mamma asked for two little writing-desks, and they brought her a number to look at, but mamma said none of them would do; she must have two

little wooden ones. With what delight Hilda and Hildebrand watched her filling it with paper, and envelopes, and some sealing-wax, and some stamps, and then some very pretty thin pink and blue paper and envelopes.

"Can you guess who these two desks are for?" asked mamma.

Hilda and Hildebrand grew very red; but they both said, "For us, mamma."

"Yes, they are for you two, so that you may write to me when I am far away. This thin paper is what you must write to me on; and you must learn to write very carefully and nicely."

The tears came into the children's eyes, and they wanted to rush at mamma and hug her; but she whispered to them to wait till they got home all by themselves, and then she would kiss them a great, great many times.

"When papa comes," said mamma, "he is going to help me to choose you each a little Bible."

"Of our very own, mamma?" asked Hilda and Hildebrand together.

"Of your very own," said papa, who had been standing for a few seconds quietly behind the twins and mamma, all three of whom had been



so busy and happy over the desks and the writing-paper that they had never heard him.

"Dear, dear papa," said the children, "so you are come at last."

Holding a hand of each little twin in one of his own, papa said to one of the young men in the shop who was doing nothing, "I want to see some Bibles, the best print you have."

The young man brought a great many; but papa did not like them; they were too small, or too large, or too something. At last the young man said he feared they had got no more.

"Ah!" said great, tall papa, smiling, "I think I see something in that shelf up there;" and leaving hold of the children's hands, he leant forward, and stretching out his arm, pulled down a large package with "Bibles" written outside.

"Come, we will look in here," said he, "and see if we can find anything like the sort of Bible I want."

"Ha, ha!" said papa, "this is something like!" and he held up two pretty little Bibles with bright red leather covers, beautiful large print, and maps and pictures inside. There were two others exactly like them, only blue covers; and papa said Hilda and Hildebrand

might chose which they liked best, but without any hesitation they both chose the red.

Then papa called the young man, and said, "Look here. I want this name and that name, and this date, put on this and that Bible." And papa took out his pencil and wrote, "Hilda," "Hildebrand," "1st August 1860." "Now," said papa, showing him the paper, "you must be so good as to have these names put on the cover of the Bibles in large gold printing letters, and the day of the month and year also."

"Very well, sir," said the young man, "they will be ready this afternoon about four o'clock."

"O papa! may we take our Bibles home with us?" asked the Twins very eagerly.

Papa smiled, and stroked their little brown curls, and just nodded his head.

Presently he said, "Twins, come here" (they were busy looking at a picture-book on a table in one corner of the shop), "and, mamma, I want you also. Now don't you think," asked papa, "that it would be very nice if we were to give dear, good old Nursie a present?"

"Oh, what joy!" interrupted the children, clapping their hands. "Nursie, do you hear?"

"Hu - - sh !" said mamma, smiling, and laying her finger on her lips ; "it must be a secret."

"Yes, yes," said Hildebrand, rushing at poor Nursie ; and pulling her bonnet as tight as his two little hands had strength to pull over her ears, so that she might not hear a single word, called out, "You can talk away, papa, she is quite deaf now."

But Nursie did not like her best Sunday bonnet being pulled nearly off like that, and shook her head so violently that her spectacles flew off her nose with a great jerk on to the floor, and might have been trodden on and broken had not papa picked them up for her, and told Hildebrand not to be so rough.

Then Hildebrand begged Nursie's pardon, and went back to hear what papa and mamma were choosing for her present.

"I think there is nothing she would like so much as a nice large Bible," said mamma.

"So I think," said papa ; "and so do I," said Hilda and Hildebrand.

Some large beautiful Bibles were laid on the counter, and one with a dark-brown cover, and such large print that Nursie could read it without her spectacles, was chosen.

"O papa ! O mamma !" said the Twins,

"we have both got a silver shilling; may we each give it to pay for Nursie's Bible?"

"Yes, you may, dears, and then it will be from us four."

Hilda and Hildebrand were made so happy by joining in giving the nice Bible to Nursie, and we shall hear by and by how happy Nurse was to get it.

"Do you know," said papa, looking at his watch, "it is nearly two o'clock? and I am getting very hungry; let us have something to eat at Mrs Goodbun's before we go to Mr Takeuswell to be photographed."

"I shall like very much to go to Mrs Goodbun's," whispered Hildebrand to Hilda, "but I do not care about going to be *votoscratched*."

"No more do I," whispered Hilda, "they take such a long time, and have such dirty hands, and look so ugly with that nasty black cloth over their heads."

"And then it is so hot and smelling," added Hildebrand, crossly. "Shall we ask not to go?"

"Not to go where?" asked Nurse, who had heard a little bit of what Hildebrand said.

Hildebrand grew red, and said nothing.

"To the *potoscratcher's*," said Hilda.

"Oh, my little Twinnies!" said Nursie, "you don't know how unkind and naughty it would be not to care to go; dear mamma and papa want to have their little boy and girl to look at when they are far away, that they may remember what they are like, and think what a happy day they had in Marton, where they got their very own Bibles, and walked with mamma and papa, and had I don't know what happiness. Just see," added Nursie, "here we are at Mrs Goodbun's, and if papa has not gone and ordered gingerbeer and buns for us."

"Dear, kind papa!" said the children to each other. "I am sure we shall like being voto-scratched, Hilda, when it's for mamma to take to the India country?"

"Yes, Twinnie," said Hilda, squeezing his hand hard, "we shall like it very much; and, after all, that nasty smell is rather nice, and perhaps their hands will be very clean, and the black cloth on their heads keeps them warm . . . and . . . oh! . . . doesn't the gingerbeer tickle your throat, Hildebrand?"

"Yes, and makes our eyes full of tears, but quite different to crying, for when you cry, Hilda, you make a very ugly face."

"And so do you, Hildebrand."

"And so does everybody," said mamma, who had overheard the children's conversation; "but now, little ones and Nurse, if you have all finished your buns, we must go to be photographed."

The children looked at each other and smiled; and Nursie, who was watching them, knew what that little bright smile meant. "We will try to be so patient and good, and not get tired, or be selfish little twins."

"Mamma," said papa, "if you will go on I will follow you directly."

When they got to Mr Takeuswell, mamma said, "We have all come to be photographed, Mr Takeuswell. Is it a good day for taking well?"

"Very, indeed, madam. Will you come this way?" said Mr Takeuswell; "there is not too much sun, nor too little light, so it will be very quick." Into a room with glass ceiling and walls they all walked.

Just as Nurse was taking off their hats and gloves, and brushing their hair with a little brush she took out of her bag, in came papa. And what do you think he had been for?—dear, good, kind papa! To get the Bibles for Hilda and Hildebrand, that they might each hold their

very own Bibles in their hands whilst they were photographed.

How pleased and delighted they were, and held them up to show to Mr Takeuswell, who was standing beside the large box on legs, into which the man with rather dirty hands, and a black cloth on his head, was peeping.

"What *beautiful* books!" said Mr Takeuswell; "but don't speak to me for one minute, and hold them like that till I can come and look at them. Now, come and show them to me," said this odd Mr Takeuswell, who, to Hildebrand's and Hilda's great surprise, turned round to papa and said, "The little people are taken, sir, and very nicely too." So you see they had not so very long to wait after all.

Then Mr Takeuswell said he would put Nurse into the box, and make her come out on a piece of glass. So Nursie put on her cap, with black and white ribbons in it, and took her spectacles off her nose and held them in her hands, and sat very still and quiet in a large chair.

Very soon Mr Takeuswell said, "That will do, ma'am; you have sat very nicely;" and off he ran with Nurse on the glass into the little room (where Hilda and Hildebrand saw a lot of bottles,

and the gas burning, and heard water trickling down, and smelt a funny smell), the door of which he shut quite tight ; so the children could not see what he did.

Presently out he came, holding the glass in his hand, and showed it to Nurse, who only said, "Dearie me, is that like me? I did not think I was *quite* so ugly-looking."

"You are not a bit ugly, dear, pretty Nursie," cried out the children ; "you are as beautiful almost as mamma, but not quite."

Mr Takeuswell then took mamma and papa ; and when it was all over, papa said he thought it was time for him to go and see whether Miss Sinclair was at the station.

"Papa," asked Hildebrand, "please, who is Miss Sinclair?" And Hilda, although she said nothing, asked mamma the same question with her large brown eyes.

"Don't ask now, dears," said papa ; "this evening mamma will tell you."

"I will tell you before you go to bed," said mamma ; "and now, say good afternoon to Mr Takeuswell, and come along."

Off they all went to another large shop, where mamma and Nurse chose a number of stockings



to fit Hilda and Hildebrand, and bought needles and cotton and buttons, and a quantity of other things, which Hilda and Hildebrand did not much care about; so they amused themselves by watching the people who came into the shop.

Just as they were beginning to get rather tired of looking at people whom they did not know, in walked papa, and a lady with him.

"Is that Miss Sinclair, Nursie?" asked the twins.

"Yes, dears; I think so."

I do wonder why she has come, they thought; but they said nothing.

After speaking to the lady for a little, mamma said, "Here are my Twins, Miss Sinclair; they are very anxious to know you."

Then Miss Sinclair said, "Dear little Hilda and Hildebrand, I am going to stay with you for some little time, and I do hope you will love me. I love little children very much."

Hilda and Hildebrand looked in her face steadily for a minute without speaking, and then Hildebrand said, "You look very kind;" and Hilda said, "I hope you will stay for two whole weeks."

Then mamma and papa smiled, and mamma said, "We will talk about that when we get home; now it is quite time for us to get into the carriage, and what I have left undone I must finish another day."

When they got back, the children were too anxious to unpack their desks and Bibles to think of their tea, and would, I believe, have gone to bed without any, had not Nurse reminded them of it.

"Twins," said papa, "you must go to bed, you look so tired; but before you go, I am going to show you Nurse's Bible; and you may both take it to her, and say it is from mamma and papa and the Twinnies."

Hilda and Hildebrand were so pleased at the thoughts of Nurse's happiness in receiving the Bible, that they did not a bit mind going to bed half-an-hour earlier.

As for Nurse, I do wish you could have seen her face when she looked up and saw the little twins carrying this large Bible between them, and calling out, "Nursie, Nursie, for you, from papa and mamma—and us."

She took it out of their hands, and, after looking at it all over, said: "Twinnies, are you sure

that it is really for me? I never saw such a beautiful Bible. Such beautiful print! And oh, see—there is something written in the beginning.” And Nurse read:

TO NURSE YOUNG,  
WITH AFFECTIONATE ESTEEM,  
FROM  
NORMAN AND MARY MONTGOMERY;  
ALSO FROM HILDA AND HILDEBRAND.

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“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”—Prov. iii. 6.

“Oh, my little darlings,” said Nursie, “how I shall love this Book! both because your papa and mamma and you have given it to me, and also because it is God’s own Book. Come here, and be kissed; and now, kneel down, my pets, and we will each put our hands on this Bible, and ask God to make us love reading His holy Word.”

So Nurse knelt down, holding Hilda and Hildebrand’s little clasped hands in her own, which she rested on the Bible, whilst the children knelt on each side of her, as she said these words:

“O God, our heavenly Father, for Thy dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, grant that we may love reading Thy holy Word above every

book in the whole world. Oh, as King David prayed, may it be a light unto our feet and a lamp unto our paths, so that, if at any time we wander from the right road, we may have light from on high to lighten us back again. Oh, our heavenly Father, I am a poor ignorant old woman, and these dear little children are very young, and know but little; but my heart's desire for them and for myself is, that we may be saved. O God, it is a good thing that Thou canst look right down into my heart and see how true it is, that I do earnestly desire Thy Holy Spirit to come at this very moment and comfort us, filling us with true and deep love to Thee, and to our most blessed Saviour. Hear my prayer, O God, and accept us three as Thy redeemed servants, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

"O Nursie," said the children, as they rose from their knees, "you are crying. Are you unhappy?"

"No, my precious ones," said Nursie, smiling and wiping her eyes; "no; I'm as happy as a cricket. Make haste, now, and see how soon I can get you to bed."

## CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Mr Trotter came the next morning with the letters, he saw the children standing at the windows, and signed to them to come to him.

"Look here, dears," he said, and he pulled out of his pocket Hilda and Hildebrand's letter to the Queen.

"Mis——ter Trotter!" exclaimed Hilda, but she could say nothing more.

"So you have never posted our letter after all, and you promised you would," cried out Hildebrand, his face all red with passion. "Oh, you are a cruel, deceitful old 'mudgeon" (Curmudgeon, he meant to say, but could not pronounce it), "and I'll never trust you again."

"Stay, Master Hildebrand," said old Trotter, walking towards him; "you are only a little boy, and are speaking to an old man in a very unbecoming way."

"It's you, Mr Trotter," interrupted Hilda, "who have behaved in a very unacoming way, to a little boy and girl."

"You know nothing about it, Miss Hilda, or you would not say so."

"Why, what is all this fuss and angry looks about?" asked a voice close by; and on looking round, the children and postman saw Miss Sinclair standing behind them.

Hilda and Hildebrand both began to talk at once, until Miss Sinclair stopped them; and then Mr Trotter, touching his hat, explained to Miss Sinclair how the children had given him this letter to the Queen to post, and how, knowing it was of no use, he had brought it back to them. "Because," said the kind old man, turning round to the children, "I knew, my poor little dears, Her Majesty could never get it; and you would have been acoming and acoming to me every morning for her letter, and been so disappointed at not getting it; and then I should have had to tell stories, and say she will write soon, or else had my heart so sore at seeing yours so sorry."

"No, no, Mr Trotter," said both Hilda and Hildebrand at once; "we should not like you to

tell stories, or have your heart sore, and we are very sorry we were so cross and rude."

"Bless you, my dears," said old Trotter, as he went on with the letter-bag.

"Mr Trotter was quite right, Hilda and Hildebrand," said Miss Sinclair.

"Was he?"

"Yes; and you were quite wrong."

"Were we? Why?" asked the children.

Then Miss Sinclair explained how that letter, tied up with string, would never reach the Queen, and would only have been torn up by the post-office people if Mr Trotter *had* posted it; and how papa *wished* to be the Queen's servant, and would not like any one to ask for him not to go to India."

"Then we made a great mistake, Twinnie," said Hilda.

"Yes; it's a good thing now the letter has come back; but it's very hard to part with mamma and papa."

"Little people," said Miss Sinclair, "don't be unhappy, but come and help me to unpack a little box in my room. At the bottom of it there is a book full of nice stories, and I brought it with me on purpose to read to you every

night before bed-time, when you won't have your mamma and papa to go to. Won't you like that, Twinnies?"

"We should like our own mamma and papa best," said the children.

"Of course you would, my little ones; but as you can't have them, won't you enjoy my reading a little story to you every night?"

"Very, very much," said the children, clapping their hands. "What are they about?"

"Ah! we shall know that when I commence reading them. See, here is the book!" It looked a very nice one, and there were pictures in it too; and the children looked as though they would have liked to hear a story at once.

But just at that moment mamma's silver whistle was heard; and Miss Sinclair said she had promised to go to mamma also, when she heard the whistle; so away they all went.

The children laughed very much, and wanted to know if Miss Sinclair was going to do lessons.

When they got into the room where mamma was, and had each got on to their high chair beside her—and Miss Sinclair was sitting on the sofa—mamma said, "Dear little Twinnies, I am going to tell you something."



Hilda and Hildebrand looked very grave.

"The day after to-morrow you are both going with Miss Sinclair and Nursie to Ferndale Abbey, to be with grandpapa and grandmamma and Aunt Isabel. You will have to drive to Marton, and then get into the 'puff-puff,' and go on, on, on, until you get to the station, where grandpapa's carriage will be waiting for you, into which you will get, and drive off merrily to the Abbey."

"Are you going too, mamma?"

"Not the day after to-morrow, dears ; but papa and I are going there before we go to India."

"Oh ! how nice," said the children, clapping their hands. "Then we shall love going in the train and having fun at grandpapa's, when you are coming by and by."

"We won't do any lessons to-day," said mamma ; "for we must be very busy packing, and Hilda and Hildebrand must help."

Hilda and Hildebrand thought this packing capital fun. John had to clamber up the ladder, and open a little door which led into the garret, and pull down this box and that box, and straps and padlocks, and tin baths, and I don't know what all.

"Now," said Miss Sinclair; "here is something for my Twins to do. You must take this box and fill it with all the books you do your lessons out of."

"Are you going to hear us our lessons, Miss Sinclair, and teach us to read and to write, and to do sums, and play on the piano, and teach us to become soldiers?" asked the children.

"Yes, dears, I hope so; but run off and pack, and I will answer all your questions another time."

It was Tuesday, and what a busy, busy day it was! and Wednesday was even busier. When night-time came, Nursie said the Twinnies looked more like little sweeps than anything else. They had been carrying books, and dusting boxes, and helping mamma and Miss Sinclair and everybody as much as they could, and their faces and hands and pinafores were nearly black.

When Thursday morning came, Nurse got up very early, before the clock had struck five; and after she was dressed, finished some of her packing, and then woke Hilda and Hildebrand, who kept calling out, "We shall soon be at Ferndale Abbey, and dear papa and mamma are coming too."

"Now, dears," said Nursie, "as soon as you are dressed, you must go down to the dining-room and eat a very good breakfast."

In the dining-room they found papa, mamma, and Miss Sinclair, all sitting at the table.

"Come to your seats, darlings," said papa; "in about half-an-hour the carriage will be here, and I want, after you have breakfasted, to speak to you."

Hilda and Hildebrand could not eat very much—I think they were too happy; so, soon papa took them into the library, where mamma and Miss Sinclair followed.

Papa and mamma sat down together on the sofa, and Hildebrand placed a chair for Miss Sinclair close to them; and then papa told the Twins how he and mamma had been praying for God to bless them, and reminded them how they had promised to be the servants of the Lord Jesus, and how they must try to be like Him, by being gentle, and loving, and kind. "God loves to see little children striving to please Him," said papa; "and if ever our Twinnies feel that they are wanting to say something which is not quite true, or to be cross, or unkind, or greedy, or in a passion, be sure to say at once,

'O God, help me to become good, for Jesus Christ's sake.' And then, when the wicked Satan hears you say that, he will be obliged to go away, and leave off trying to make you naughty, for when Jesus comes near to help you, Satan has to fly."

"Now, my little ones," said mamma, "I want just to say a few words. Miss Sinclair has been so kind as to promise me that she will be like mamma to you when I am away, so you must love her, and do everything she tells you, and try to please her in every way you can."

After mamma had finished speaking, papa knelt down, and the others with him, and he asked God to bless his dear little Twins, and Miss Sinclair, and Nursie, and let them all have a safe journey; and to create in each of them a clean heart and a right spirit, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

Just as mamma was kissing her little ones, papa said, "It's time for them to start;" so mamma bustled them and Nursie and Miss Sinclair into the carriage, and then gave to each a little pretty round tied-up basket, which she said they were not to open until they were hungry in the train.

Some more kisses and loving looks were given, the carriage door was shut, the horses moved, the wheels turned round, and they were off.

"Oh, oh!" said Hilda, "let me out! I *must* go back to mamma, I *must*. I don't care to go in the train. Oh, do let me go to mamma."

"Miss Hilda," said Nursie, "what *are* you doing? Look at your pretty little basket rolling about in the bottom of the carriage. I do wonder what is inside it. I can hear something rattling."

"Can you?" said Hildebrand. "Do let us look? Twinnie, come beside me."

But Miss Sinclair said she thought, if they would wait until they got into the train, then they might open them, but that now she would tell them a little story.

And so she did. Such a funny little one that Hilda forgot to cry any more, and laughed so merrily that Hildebrand declared the horses would soon laugh too.

"Here we are at Marton Station," said Nursie. "Now, Master Hildebrand, take care of Miss Hilda, whilst Miss Sinclair and I look after the luggage."

In a very short time they found themselves in

the train ; and after giving a loud scream, which made poor Nursie nearly jump off her seat, and put her fingers in her ears, away it went at such a pace that Nurse declared, if it went on at that rate, they would soon be at grandpapa's. Hilda and Hildebrand enjoyed looking out of the window so much ! They thought the trees and houses were running races with the train ; and once, as they were passing by some houses, some little boys and girls waved their handkerchiefs to them.

Then they went across a large river, over an iron bridge, and the train made such a funny rumbling sound as it went running along. There were little boats in the river and larger ones ; and some very large ones full of coals, which Miss Sinclair said were barges.

At last they all became hungry, so they each got their baskets and undid them. What good things mamma had put inside—sandwiches, and hard-boiled eggs, and biscuits, and a bottle of water ; and in Nursie's and Miss Sinclair's there was a book for them to read, and in Hilda's there was a box of spellicans, and in Hildebrand's one of dominoes.

So they were all able to amuse themselves.

After some time I am sorry to say Hilda and Hildebrand began to get a little cross. Hilda said Hildebrand pushed her, so that she could not play with the spellicans, and he got angry and said she pushed him.

So Nurse and Miss Sinclair put one little child on one seat, and the other on another, and covered them over, for they said they were quite sure their little Twinnies must be sleepy, or they would never think of quarreling.

And I think Miss Sinclair and Nurse were quite right, for in a few minutes the little ones were fast asleep (not before they had each blown a kiss to one another, though). And then what do you think ? Why, Nursie and Miss Sinclair both began to nod their heads, and their eyes kept shut, shutting, until they were both fast asleep also.

Presently the train stopped at a station, and the noise of the porters calling out the name, and the people running about, woke them all.

As they had ten minutes to wait there, they all got out to stretch their limbs, and Miss Sinclair got a glass of milk for the Twins, and a cup of tea for Nurse and herself. The tea was so hot that they could not drink it quickly, and the

bell rang to tell them it was time to go back to their train ; so very sorrowfully Nurse and Miss Sinclair had to leave their tea, and run off with Hilda and Hildebrand to the carriage.

They had not been long there before a kind gentleman with a white hat on his head, and a pair of spectacles on, came up to the window with their two cups of tea in his hand, and, smiling very nicely, said, " So your tea burnt you, did it ? Well, it's cooler now, and there's plenty of time for you to drink it before the train starts. I watched you, and was determined you should not lose your tea."

" Thank you very much, sir," said Miss Sinclair and Nurse ; " it is very kind of you."

" Kind—no ; not at all kind ; I'm never kind. Holloa ! so there are two little children in there. Why, dear me ! never saw such a thing in my life as two little children travelling in a train ; and so like one another, too. Why, you must be twins ? "

" Yes, we are," said Hildebrand.

" You are, are you ? Well, will you come along with me ? "

" No, thank you, sir," said Hilda very politely ; " we would rather go to grandpapa's."



"To grandpapa's, indeed ; do you mean to say you have got a grandpapa ?"

"Yes ; that we have," said 'the children gravely ; "and we have got a grandmamma, and an Aunt Isabel, and an Uncle Robert, too."

"Why, really, what odd little children you are to have such a number of relations," said this funny gentleman. Then he turned round and called out, "Here, guard, porter, boy, man, come and take back these cups, and tell them to make the tea not so hot another time. Now, children, can you make room for me, for I mean to get in ?"

"Come, Mrs Nurse," said this odd gentleman, "I think I have seen your face before."

"And I think, sir, I have seen yours before also."

"To be sure you have ; you would have been a very blind old dame if you had not—a very blind old dame indeed."

"Miss Hilda," said Nurse, whispering to her little girl, "it's—who do you think ?"

"A funny man," said Hilda.

"No, dear, it's your Uncle Robert."

Yes, it was their Uncle Robert, come to meet them, and how kind and funny he was. He told Miss Sinclair the names of the places they

passed by—he found Nurse's spectacles for her when she dropped them—and he took Hilda and Hildebrand on his knees, and played with them—and was so kind and good, that the time seemed to pass so quickly, that none of them felt tired.

When they reached Ferndale Station, Uncle Robert took a pencil out of his pocket, and writing something in an envelope, fastened it up and gave it to a porter to post.

"There," he said, smiling to Miss Sinclair and Nurse; "that is to tell Colonel Montgomery you have arrived safely." Uncle Robert took Hilda in his arms, and lifted her into grandpapa's carriage, which was waiting outside, for she was getting very sleepy. The others soon followed; and in about an hour's time the Twins, and Miss Sinclair, and Nurse found themselves inside Ferndale Abbey.

"Welcome, my dear little children, and Miss Sinclair, and good Nursie," said grandmamma, coming forward to meet them. "I am sure you must all be very tired."

"Yes, that they are," said Uncle Robert; "the best thing for them, grandmamma, will be to go to bed, they all look as sleepy as can be."

Aunt Isabel and grandpapa just came and welcomed them all very lovingly and kindly, and then, after some tea, Hilda and Hildebrand, who could scarcely keep their eyes open, were taken up-stairs by Nurse.

After they were undressed, and were just ready to be put into bed, Nurse said, "We must not forget our prayers;" but Hilda only laid her head down on Nursie's shoulder. So Hildebrand took her hands in his two little ones and said—"O God, please don't mind our saying very long prayers to-night, for we are very tired. Hilda is nearly asleep, and so am I; but we are very much obliged for coming safely. Bless mamma and papa, and"—

Here Hildebrand stopped, and when Nurse looked she found he was fast asleep. So she carried him off to his little bed in her nice room, and Miss Sinclair carried Hilda and placed her in the little bed in *her* room, and then they lay sleeping so peacefully, God's holy angels watching over them; and their mamma and papa thinking of and praying for their dear little Twins at Ferndale Abbey.

## CHAPTER V.

MISS SINCLAIR, Nurse, and the children, all enjoyed being at grandpapa's, it was such a nice large house, and in the garden close to, were the ruins of an old abbey or church, where long ago the monks had lived,—men who thought they could love God and serve our Lord Jesus Christ better by shutting themselves up in a great building, in little rooms all alone; wearing no shoes on their feet, shaving the hair off their heads, and having long brown or black dresses on, with a piece of cord round their waists.

I don't mean to say but that there were some very good men amongst them, but still it was sad that they should be so mistaken, and think they were pleasing God by living in this way.

Hilda and Hildebrand used very often to do their lessons in the abbey grounds, for it was such beautiful weather; and after they had done their reading or sums, or whatever they had to do, Miss Sinclair would say, "Now, you may go

and explore, but remember to come back whenever you hear me whistle."

Mamma had given her the silver whistle to call the children with. What fun it was exploring ! Perhaps you don't know what exploring means. Well, it was this : that every day they used to try and find some new spot in the abbey grounds which they had never seen before. Sometimes they would discover a bit of an old wall, with steps going up one side of it, which, if they mounted, would lead them to a little sort of seat on the top ; and there used to be harebells and crow's-feet growing in the crevices, and here and there cowslips ; and the green trees growing over their heads formed such a nice shade.

Often when the days were so very hot, grand-mamma used to tell Miss Sinclair and Nursie and the Twins to take their breakfast and tea out in the ruins ; and there they would lay it out, under some old arch, with little pieces of wall on each side, and enjoy having it there so much.

One day grandpapa called the children to him, and said, " Who do you think are coming to-night ? "

" Papa and mamma ? " asked Hilda and Hildebrand.

"Yes; papa and mamma, and—— Why, they are off like an arrow from a bow!" said grandpapa, looking after the children, who flew to Nursie and Miss Sinclair, crying out, "Mamma and papa are coming! Mamma and papa are coming! Oh! what shall we do for joy?"

Aunt Isabel met them coming down-stairs, looking so excited with happiness, that they did not know what to do. They could not settle to their lessons, or their toys, or anything; so kind Aunt Isabel asked Miss Sinclair if she might take them with her into the village, whilst she went to see some poor people.

For some time they could do nothing but talk of papa and mamma. Presently Aunt Isabel said, "Here are some little tracts, dears; and I want you each to give one to any people you may meet."

"What are tracts for, Aunt Isabel?" they asked.

"These tracts, dears, are telling of what a kind, loving Saviour we have, and begging people who don't know Him to pray to God to make them love Him and become His servants. You know, dears, there are some people who have never scarcely heard of a Saviour, and who never pray

to God ; so I want you, who know better, to help these poor people, and do all you can to make them happier."

"Will the tracts make them good, auntie?" asked Hildebrand.

"Perhaps, darling, something that is written in them about Jesus may make them want to know Him and love Him ; and then, you know, if they will only go to Him, He will make them good."

"Aunt Isabel," said Hilda, "my Twinnie and I do belong to Him, for we are His soldiers. We have promised Him to fight for Him, and yet we often do naughty things. I was cross to Nurse this morning, and stamped quite hard on her foot on purpose ; and Hildebrand hid his book not to say his lesson. So you see we are not made good."

"No," said Aunt Isabel, "you are not good ; but still you want to love Jesus, and to belong to Him ; and when you do wrong you are sorry for it, and ask Him not to let you be so naughty again."

"Well, auntie," said Hildebrand, "do you know, I sometimes rather like being naughty for a little."

"But you would not like always to be naughty, would you?"

"No, no! mamma and papa would be so sorry; and God too," said the little boy, in a low voice.

"Well, then, you see when you want to be naughty, it's the wicked Satan tempting you. And if you did not care at all for Jesus, he would be so glad and happy, and go on making you so wicked. But our good, kind Saviour looks down from heaven, and looks right into your little hearts, and sees how you really want to be His true soldiers; and he helps you against Satan, and makes that wicked one fly away. Now, I am going to teach you each a little verse: 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.' 'Resist' means, that when you are feeling, either of you, that you would like to do some naughty thing, you must say inside yourself very loud, '*I won't* do it—I *won't*! I belong to the Lord Jesus, who loves me to be good.'"

Hilda and Hildebrand learnt the text very quickly, and promised to say it that night to Miss Sinclair and Nursie.

Aunt Isabel went to two or three cottages, speaking to the people, and reading them each a



verse out of the Bible; and they all spoke so kindly to the little Twins, and said it would be like olden times to see some young faces, and hear little voices at the abbey. By the time they got home, Hilda and Hildebrand had given away all their tracts, and were two such happy little people.

About half-past eight that evening a carriage drove up to the door, and out got our little Twinnies' dear mamma and papa. I need not tell you how happy they all were to meet again.

When Hilda and Hildebrand went to bed that night, mamma put into each of their hands a little box, which she said they were to keep and wear what was inside always, whilst mamma and papa were away in India.

Hilda and Hildebrand's hands shook so with delight, that they could scarcely open their boxes, but at last when they did, what do you think they found? Why, wrapped up in cotton wool, two lovely round gold locketts, which opened, and had a picture of mamma and papa inside.

"O mamma! O papa!" was all they could say, but mamma knew from their faces how happy her little Twins were.

Papa and mamma then showed them another

little box which they said was for Nursie, and another great large one which was for Miss Sinclair.

"Miss Sinclair! Nurse!" called out the children, "come to mamma and papa."

When they came, papa gave Miss Sinclair a beautiful workbox, and mamma gave Nurse a lovely gold brooch, with hers and papa's and the Twinnies' hair in it.

Nurse ran out of the room without speaking. Hilda and Hildebrand thought she was too happy to say anything, but I think she was nearly crying, she was so pleased, and I think mamma and papa thought so too.

Miss Sinclair said a workbox was just what she had so long been wanting to have, and this was such a beauty, it would last her all her life.

Hilda and Hildebrand had their locketts put under their pillow, and in the morning when they were dressed Nursie tied them round their necks with a piece of ribbon, and said they must always, always wear them, whilst dear mamma and papa were away.

The first of September was a bright warm lovely day, but a very sorrowful one to our little Twins, for that morning the carriage had taken

away their own papa and mamma to the station, on their way to what the children *would* call "the India monkey place."

"O Hildebrand ! give me your hand to squeeze : shall we ever, ever be happy again ?" sobbed out poor little Hilda.

"Twinnie," said Hildebrand, with the tears running down his face, "let us hide amongst the ruins."

And away the two poor little things ran ; and after some hunting, found their own little hiding-place, just under an oak tree by the side of a wall.

"Hilda," said Hildebrand, after they had gone on crying for some time, "Nurse said the other day, if we were to grow up naughty, it would make her so unhappy, she thought her heart would break. I am quite, quite sure, ours are breaking now."

"O Hildebrand !" said Hilda, stopping in her crying, "you don't hear any cracking noise, do you ? I should not like our hearts to break, we could never mend them again, for they are deep down, inside here" (and Hilda struck her little chest), "and no one, not even Nurse or Miss Sinclair, could get inside to mend them !"

Just as Hildebrand was going to answer, a voice was heard saying—"Poor little things, poor little things, come to me," and on looking up they saw kind Uncle Robert standing in front of them.

"O Uncle Robert!" exclaimed Hildebrand, jumping up and running to him, "you will be our papa, won't you, until our own great tall papa comes back."

"And you will be mamma, too," said Hilda, springing into the arms which Uncle Robert held out to her.

"An odd mamma I should make, my little pets," said their Uncle. "Come, let us see how I should look in Hilda's hat;" and taking it off her head, he popped on her his large white one, which tumbled nearly over her mouth, and then put hers on. It stuck just on one side of his head, making him look so funny, that the children burst out laughing.

"Come, my Twinnies," said Uncle Robert, "it does me good to hear you laugh—yes, indeed, I will do my best to be your father and mother, and anything you like, whilst they are away. But don't you think you had better come in to your dinner; and if you will try to be good and

happy, I will have a game of romps with you this evening. Would you not like that?" asked their uncle, looking at them, for they said nothing.

"Please, Uncle Robert," said Hilda, "Miss Sinclair said she would read us a story out of her great large book this evening before bed-time."

"Oh, did she; well that's very kind of her, very kind, indeed; but how would you like if I told you one instead?"

"So, so much," called out the Twins joyfully, "may it be about a little girl?" asked Hilda.

"Two little girls," said Hildebrand.

"Let me see," said Uncle Robert, stroking his chin. "Yes, it shall be about two little girls."

"Please, may she be a naughty little girl," requested Hilda.

"Yes, she shall be a naughty little girl," said Uncle Robert, "but then you know she will have to get punished—all naughty little girls, and boys too, must be punished."

"Oh! then, please don't let her be too naughty," begged the Twins.

"Well, we'll see. But come along now. Grandpapa and grandmamma, and Aunt Isabel

and Miss Sinclair, and Nursie, will all be wondering where we are." So back to the house Uncle Robert led them.

In the evening, just as Nursie had finished dressing Hilda and Hildebrand for going down-stairs, tap-tap came at the door, and on Hildebrand's opening it, there stood kind Uncle Robert. In a moment he had perched Hilda on one shoulder and Hildebrand on the other, and ran along a passage very fast with them, then down-stairs into a large hall, and then up a little passage again. At a large door covered with green baize he stopped, and opening it, went into a room full of pictures and books, and in some bookcases there were no books, but all filled with curious-looking cups and saucers, and plates, and china teapots. Hilda and Hildebrand thought Uncle Robert must take a great quantity of tea, if he used all these; but they did not say anything. There were birds in glass cases, who never moved, and great horns hung up on the wall, and walking-sticks, and guns, and I don't know what else besides. Indeed, it was the funniest room the Twins had ever seen.

"Well, how do you like it?" asked Uncle

Robert, smiling. "It's a funny room, is it not? Go to the table, Hildebrand, and bring me that little box."

When Hildebrand brought it, his uncle took out two little cakes of chocolate, and gave one to each of the Twins.

"May I give mine to Nurse?" asked Hilda.

"And mine to Miss Sinclair?" asked her brother.

"Yes," said Uncle Robert. "I'm glad you are not greedy. Now for the story!"

So, with the children sitting on his knee, Uncle Robert told them the following story of—

NAUGHTY MISS EMILY WHO GOT KICKED OFF THE  
PONY.

Emily was a little girl about six years old, and her papa and mamma had taken her with them to stay for a few days at a friend's house. There was a pretty pony in a field not far from the house, which belonged to a little boy who was at school; and, to Emily's delight, she had been allowed to have a ride one morning. Emily's great fault was, that she always thought she could do everything as well as other people, quite forgetting she was only a little child; and she

felt quite cross and naughty because her papa would not allow her to ride as fast as another little girl called Eva. Now Eva had a pony at her own home, and was in the habit of riding, whilst Emily had never been on a pony's back before.

All the afternoon Emily was very silent, and not a good-tempered-looking little girl as usual. She was thinking to herself how much she wished she could ride as fast as Eva, and be trusted to hold the reins all by herself, and go alone. And when Eva spoke to her, she scarcely answered, and preferred sitting quietly reading, to running and playing about. At last the nurse came to say that the children must come and get ready to go down to dessert.

When they were dressed, and were walking down-stairs together, Emily happened to look out of the window, and there, in the field, she saw the pony quietly eating some grass.

"How nice and pretty he looks! How I should like to go and have a ride on him! And why should I not?" thought she to herself.

"Are you not coming, Emily?" asked Eva.

"No, I mean to look out of this window for a little."



Eva waited patiently for a few seconds, and then said, "Please, Emily, do come! We shall be so late, and I don't like to go in to the dining-room by myself."

"A little girl who can ride as well as you can, ought not to be afraid of going to dessert by herself. I am going to stay here just as long as I like."

"How very unkind you are, Emily!" and the tears almost came into poor little Eva's eyes, but she went away alone.

For a short time longer Emily kept watching the pony, who was busily eating the grass and whisking his long tail from side to side to drive away the tiresome flies, who kept buzzing round and teasing him.

"I declare I will go!" said Emily to herself. "He looks very quiet and gentle, and I will just have one good gallop round the field, to see whether I can't keep on as well as Eva does. And then, when I tell everybody what I have done, they will think me so clever."

Away went Emily down-stairs, never stopping to think whether she was doing right or wrong, or whether her papa and mamma would like her to do such a thing; but opening a glass door

which led into the garden, she ran down one of the side-walks, and coming to some railings, climbed over them and got into the field. Up she went to the pony, who raised his head from the grass, and then shook it at her, as much as to say, "Little girls in white muslin frocks and thin shoes on ought not to come into this field wanting to ride me."

"You pretty pony," said Emily softly, "I want to get on your back and have a ride." But the pony only went on eating away at the grass, and paid no attention to her.

Emily went nearer to him, and then tried to jump on his back, holding his mane with one hand; but although she kept jumping and springing up and down for some time like a jack-in-a-box, yet it was of no use—she could not manage to get on. This failure almost made her cry with anger and vexation, so determined was she to show Eva and everybody else how well she could ride.

Again she was dancing and bobbing up and down, endeavouring to mount, when she was startled by hearing a voice on the other side of the railing say, "Do you want to get on him, miss?"

Looking round quickly, she saw a lad much older than herself, and very dirty and untidy, watching her.

"Of course I do!" said Emily, rudely.  
"Come at once and help me."

"I think a young lady like you might say 'please,'" answered the boy, quietly getting over the railings.

"Oh! I will say 'please,' as many times as you like, if you will only help me on. But don't touch my clean dress with your very dirty hands."

"How can I put you on without touching you?" asked the boy, crossly.

"Why, bring the pony to the railings, and I will climb on to the top rail, and spring on."

No sooner said than done, and there was naughty Miss Emily seated on the pony's back sideways and without a saddle.

"Ha! this is delightful," exclaimed the child.  
"Now, pony, gallop away;" but the pony would not move, and the dirty, untidy boy burst out laughing, which made Emily very angry. "Don't laugh and be so silly, boy, but break me a stick off that tree. No, don't give it me, but you whip the pony whilst I hold its mane."

Quickly the boy got a stick, and touching the pony gently, it began to trot; but Emily did not like the trotting, for it bumped her so badly up and down, and shook her so, that she felt every minute she must fall off. "Make him gallop, boy," she cried out, and the boy thereupon gave the pony a great cut behind. On feeling this, away went the pony as fast as he could, with poor Emily, first tumbling to one side, then to the other, her hair blowing into her eyes, both her shoes lying somewhere in the grass, her white frock all tearing and cracking from her leaning forward so much to clasp the pony's neck. There she went, bumping and jumping, swinging and clinging, pulling and clutching, panting and sobbing. Alas! poor Emily, what a sad plight you are in!

"Stop him! stop him!" she tried to call out, but her breath was so taken away she could not speak. Her head began to grow quite giddy with going so fast round and round, and each moment she thought she *must* tumble off, when suddenly the pony stood still, and, giving a kick at the same time, away flew poor Emily over his head, not into the soft grass, but into a small pond of very muddy water. Oh! how the nasty

water ran into her mouth and nose and eyes and ears, and how Miss Emily spluttered and splattered. The untidy boy came running to the spot, and quickly pulled the unfortunate and unhappy child out.

"I don't think, Miss, you will soon go riding again. You do look a funny object," said the unkind boy, bursting out laughing. "I think I had better make myself scarce, or may be I shall catch it, for I hear voices in the garden;" and over the railings the boy jumped, and was soon out of sight.

Now that Emily was left entirely by herself, and saw the state she was in, dripping wet, and covered with mud and grass stains, she burst out crying. "Oh, dear! how naughty and bad I have been," she sobbed; "what will my papa and mamma think of me?"

All this time Eva had been waiting for Emily in the drawing-room; she did not care to go in to dessert without her. Hearing the glass-door open, she ran into the hall, and there saw poor Emily, all dripping and dirty, standing at the door.

"Oh! my poor dear Emily, what have you been doing?" cried kind little Eva. "Come

quickly with me up-stairs to Nurse, who will help to put you right again."

When Nurse saw Emily she said, "Miss Emily, you must go to bed at once, and it will be very well if you escape having a very bad cold."

Emily, who was too wretched and unhappy to speak, was soon undressed and popped into a nice warm bed. When she had got a little more comfortable, she begged for her mamma to be sent for.

When her mamma came into her room, she did not wait for her to ask any questions, but told her directly how naughty she had been, and wanted to know if she could ever be forgiven.

"My dear little child," replied her mother, "you have received a good punishment for your fault, so I will not say much more about it; but you must thank God, Emily, that you were not killed, for, when the pony kicked you off, if your poor little head had struck against the wall, or a stone, you might never have moved or spoken again. Let this be a lesson to you for the future, not to be jealous and envious when you see people can do things better than

you can. Now, kiss me, and try to go to sleep."

But before Emily went to sleep, she had to drink a glassful of very bitter medicine, which nurse brought her, to prevent her catching any cold from the ducking in the pond.

Emily never forgot the lesson she learnt that evening; and if ever she was inclined to think she could do this or that very well, and better than any of her brothers or sisters, her mother always reminded her of how she was kicked off by the pony!

"Now," said Uncle Robert, looking at his watch, "it is past seven o'clock. Miss Sinclair will be wanting you—you must go. Stay one moment, though. How did you like Miss Emily?"

"Oh! we like the story so much, thank you, Uncle Robert; but I don't think," said Hilda, "she could have been a *faithful soldier*, or she would not have been so disobedient."

"A faithful soldier. What do you mean?" asked their uncle.

"Of the Lord Jesus Christ," said Hildebrand, looking up at his uncle; and putting one little

hand on his, he said, "My Twinnie and I have promised God and mamma and papa to be His faithful soldiers."

"God give you strength to be so, my children," said Uncle Robert, laying his hand on their little brown, curly heads. "Satan will try to take you away from Him, but you must put on the 'whole armour of God,' and *then* you can fight against him, but not without it."

"What is the whole armour of God?" asked Hildebrand.

"Are the little cracks in our skin armour?" asked Hilda, pointing to the little pores in the skin of her hand.

"No," said Uncle Robert, smiling; "the armour of God consists in—first, 'the breast-plate of righteousness'; then, your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; thirdly, the shield of faith; and, fourthly, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God'" (Eph. vi. 13–17).

"Have you got a Bible each of you?" asked Uncle Robert.

"Yes, we have."

"Then you know what I mean by the Word of God. Our little Twins must ask God to make



them love His holy Word very much," said Uncle Robert, kissing the little ones; "and now you must really go." But Uncle Robert had to take them back to Nurse, for they could not find their way.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE days, weeks, and months passed very quickly at Ferndale Abbey; and if their dear mamma and papa had not been so very far away from them, the children would have been perfectly happy, for everybody was so very kind to them.

Miss Sinclair said she loved them as much as if they were her very own, and that they were getting on so nicely with their lessons, and she was sure papa and mamma would be so pleased when they came back.

I don't mean to say that Hilda and Hildebrand were never naughty; they were sometimes, but never for long; and they were always so very, very sorry for it.

One day Uncle Robert gave them such a nice book, all full of beautiful pictures, called "The Pilgrim's Progress;" they kept it for their Sunday book, and, next to the Bible, I think it is the best book in the world. Miss Sinclair and

Nursie, and sometimes Aunt Isabel and Uncle Robert, used to read it to them. When they came to places they could not understand, it was always explained to them. And how Hilda and Hildebrand loved that book !

Miss Sinclair used very often to read them funny stories, too, out of her book ; and they always enjoyed them very much.

When grandpapa and grandmamma saw how very much the little Twins delighted in hearing tales told them, they promised that they would each tell them one ; and one evening, when they came to the drawing-room for the half-hour before bed-time, grandmamma called them to her, and said she was going to tell them a story which was told her long, long ago, by her grandmother, when she was a very little girl. "This is the story : it is called 'LITTLE EINA,' " said grandmamma ; "and I hope you will enjoy hearing it as much as I did.

"Long, long ago, in an old castle not far from the sea, there lived a little girl called Eina. Poor little Eina ! She had no brothers or sisters, and her only young companion was her wee dog Fly. She had a papa and mamma, but they were a great deal away from home ;

and she had a governess and a nurse, but they were rather old, and could not run about with her. So Eina liked better running races, and playing with Fly, than sitting with them; and often when they were busy talking to one another—and it tired Eina, for she could not understand one-half that they said—she would look at Fly and say, ‘My pretty doggie, come with me; we will go right up to the top of the house, and look at the sea.’

“Then Fly would wag his tail, and shake his little head with joy; so that the small silver bell, fastened to a blue collar round his neck, would tinkle so merrily, and he would look up in Eina’s face and say, ‘Bow-wow,’ twice over, very gently and prettily, like this—(here grand-mamma made her voice very small)—‘Bow-wow, bow-wow,’ which meant, ‘I am so glad to go with you;’ and then away the two would go together, up a great, great many wide stairs, till their poor dear little legs ached, and they wished they were at the top. Then there came a long, long passage, down which they would run so fast. Very often Eina would tumble, because she ran so quickly; but she never cried, oh, no, unless she was very much hurt; and

then only for a little time, because she was five years old, and knew better.

“When they had got to the end of this very long passage, there were some more great wide stairs to go up ; and Eina and Fly would sit down on one of the steps, and talk to one another for a little, whilst they rested—that is to say, Eina would talk to Fly, and the little dog answered her by looking up in her face, licking her little hands, and saying, ‘Bow-wow, bow-wow.’

“After they had clambered up these stairs, they came to a weenie passage, with a door at the end of it ; and if Eina stood on her tip-toes, and put her pinafore over the handle, which was stiff and old, and turn it quickly, the door would fly open, and there was a nice snug little room, with a large window at one end. There were two great iron bars outside, so that Eina could not tumble out if it was open ; and there were two great wooden steps up right into the window ; so large they were, that on the top one Eina and Fly could sit together, and yet there was room for two or three more little girls, and boys too, to sit beside them.

“Now was little Eina perfectly happy ; and because Eina was happy, Fly was happy too ;

and there they sat—Eina's little white face pressed against the window-pane, and Fly's little black nose pressed against the glass also. Oh, how high up they were!—so high, so high, that they could peep into the wood-pigeon's nest which was built up on the very top branch of the tall old cedar-tree; and if Eina tapped on the window, and made a little noise, so that the wood-pigeon flew away, she could count the eggs in the nest. But she only did this once—and there were one, two, eggs in it—for she did not like to frighten the pretty gentle bird; and the sweet pigeon knew little Eina loved her, and stayed quietly on her nest, and watched the little girl and her dog. But there was a great deal more to be seen. Right down—far, far below—in the garden, there was the large fountain playing, and sending the water up so high, that Eina felt sure she could catch some of the drops if only she might open the window; but papa and mamma had made her promise never to do that. So then Eina stopped wishing to open it, and quietly watched the water, which looked like large rain; only, this rain came from the ground, and went up into the sky, instead of coming down from the sky and

going into the ground ; and then there were the pretty gold fish in the water, all round the fountain. There was one old fat one who used to swim races with the little ones ; and it did make Eina laugh so, to see the way in which they jerked their little tails from side to side, and moved their funny little fins about.

“One day, whilst Eina and Fly were watching them, and Eina was loving them so much, and thinking them such dear little happy things, she saw a great bird fly out of a tree, and go swiftly down towards the fountain. This bird had a long neck, and a great long bill ; its feathers were a very pretty slate colour ; it had long legs, which dangled down behind, and it flew very quickly. ‘Oh !’ thought Eina, ‘what a pretty, pretty bird ; dear sweet thing, how fast he flies ! Ah ! I see’ (and she nodded her little curly head to him) ; ‘he is going to watch my darling fishes.’ Just then she saw him dart his long bill quickly into the water ; and she thought, ‘Yes, I was sure he was a dear, nice bird ; he is going to play with the little wee fishes.’ But all of a sudden, up flew the great bird again, with something shining in the wicked bill that he had darted so quickly into the water ; and

poor little Eina's face grew very red, and she watched very hard; and as it came nearer, she gave a loud scream, and tapped on the window, crying out, 'Naughty, wicked bird, drop it, drop it—*do*.' Then little Fly barked very loud; and the bad bird was so filled with alarm, when he heard these strange noises, that he opened his bill, and out fell the poor little fish again into the water. And Eina and Fly saw it swim away; but Eina felt so unhappy, for she was afraid the little fish must have got sorely pinched. So she cried very much, and, putting her arms tight round Fly's neck, and hugging him to her heart, said, 'Oh, dear little dog Fly, who would have thought such a pretty bird could have been so cruel and wicked?' And Fly licked her face, and said, 'Bow-wow, bow-wow,' which meant, 'Don't cry, dear little Eina.'

"All at once Eina forgot to cry any more, and began to laugh so merrily; for out came the rabbits on to the lawn, and they sat up on their hind legs, and jumped over one another, and scampered about, and were so funny.

"There was a large old black one, who sat up just like a little old man. He was quite black, except one tiny white spot on his forehead, and



he began to wash his little dear face so briskly, and seemed so eager about it, that Eina said to Fly, 'He wants to make his face quite white, does he not, little dog? But he will never, never be able to do that. If you licked your face all day long, little dog Fly, it would always be black, would it not?' and Fly said, 'Bow-wow, bow-wow!'

"At last Eina got tired of watching the rabbits; so, after looking at the great large blue sea, and loving the little boats which went sailing so grandly and quietly along, and wishing so much she was in one; and after nodding and smiling to the bonnie sea-gulls, who looked like golden birds when the sun shone on their pretty feathers, she thought to herself, 'I think I feel rather hungry. Fly and I will go and get something to eat.' So down she slipped from her high seat. It took her some little time to slide down; first down on to one step, then on to the other, but at last she reached the floor safely. Then Fly, who did not like jumping from such a high place on to the hard ground, began to hold his head up very high indeed in the air, and whine and toss his little black nose up and down, which made Eina laugh so much that she fell quite

down on the floor. Then she held out her pinafore, and said, 'Funny little dog Fly, jump on here.' When Fly heard that, he gave a great spring, and he was down too.

"Away now they went along the passage, and down the great wide stairs. It was not such hard work going down as up, and did not make their legs ache so much; but all at once a butterfly, which was fluttering up and down a window, suddenly startled them both by flying right in their faces, and down they rolled—roll, roll, flip, flap, flop—till they both reached the ground. Then Eina jumped up, but she looked very grave, for she found she had torn her pinafore, and some of the buttons on her dress had flown off; but she was not hurt, and Fly shook himself, and his little bell tinkled, but he was not hurt.

"So then Eina smiled and said—

"Dear little dog Fly, how soon we have got to the bottom.' And Fly said, 'Bow-wow, bow-wow.'

"Here Eina's nurse appeared, and she said, 'Come, Miss Eina, to your dinner. Miss Upright, your governess, has been waiting some time for you. If you stay so long in that room at the top of the castle, we must not let you go there so

often.' 'Oh, please do let me go, Nurse,' said Eina. 'Not if you *will* go forgetting the time, like a selfish child, Miss Eina, for my legs are not so young as yours, and it tires me very much mounting those high stairs,' said the old nurse, gravely shaking her head from side to side. Whilst she shook her head at Eina in this way, the shaking made her large gold spectacles fall off her nose right on the floor, which little dog Fly perceiving, he darted at them, and picking them up in his mouth, ran away with them as fast as he could. When poor nurse saw this, she too ran after Fly, but she could not go very fast. This made Eina laugh so much that she could not run at all. Presently she thought, 'Oh, how selfish I am ; running tires my nurse, and Fly may spoil her spectacles ;' so away she ran as fast as her little legs could carry her after Fly, who was sitting in a corner biting away at the spectacles, and was naughty and growled at nurse, making snaps and snips at her hands and feet whenever she tried to take them from him, which frightened the poor old woman very much, and made her jump about with fear. He let Eina take them though, and she gave them back, saying, 'I am very sorry, my nurse, that

little dog Fly should have behaved so badly. Are not you sorry too, Fly ?' but he only shook his head, and said, 'Bow-wow, bow-wow,' rather crossly.

"When Eina went into the dining-room, Miss Upright was sitting at the table, looking very tired with having waited so long, and she said, 'Eina, Eina! will you never remember to come to your dinner at the proper time?'

"Eina felt very sorry, and said, 'I will try and not forget again.' After their dinner was over, Eina got her dear doll Lena to play with for a little time, and then she did her lessons with Miss Upright. Now, Eina did want to be a good child. She knew when she was selfish, and naughty, and tiresome, that she never felt happy; so she did her lessons quickly and nicely. Besides, too, she wanted very much to learn to read, so she tried her very best to take pains. Then Miss Upright was pleased, and said, 'Eina, you are a good child; you have been trying to please me this afternoon, so I am glad to please you. You may go with Fly and Lena to your favourite spot under the fir-tree in the wood. Don't go anywhere else, and be sure and be back in time for tea.'

"It was a very warm afternoon ; the sun was shining brightly, the little birds were singing merrily, and every now and then a squirrel, with such a beautiful tail, would scamper across the little path in front of Eina, and then run quickly up a tree.

"Often Eina and Fly would stand still to watch one, and the little squirrel would peep down at them through the branches, and play bo-peep with them, first popping his little head on one side of a bough, and then on the other, looking so merry with his large brown eyes. And Eina thought to herself, 'Oh, what fun it must be to be a squirrel, and be able to run up a tree so fast, and not be afraid of tearing your pinafore or your dress, or be obliged to be back in time for dinner and tea, or else get scolded for being late !'

"On Eina went towards the old fir-tree, where she was generally so fond of sitting, playing with her doll Lena, and talking to Fly.

"But Eina was not happy just now, for she was wishing for what she ought not to wish for, that she might be a little squirrel instead of a little girl.

"Now, dear little Twins," said grandmamma,

“Remember you can never be happy unless you are contented to be just what God has made you. He knows what is good for little children, and for grown-up people also, far better than they do. There is *one* thing though that you may wish and ask for, and that is, for God to make you good children, and to help you always to do right, for Jesus Christ’s sake, and to send His Holy Spirit into your hearts. Then you will always be happy children, and make those who love you, happy too.

“I am sorry to say little Eina did not think of this, but she kept saying to herself, ‘Oh, dear me! I do wish God had let me be one of those pretty little squirrels, instead of a little girl, and then I too could have climbed up to the very tip, tip, top of a tree, and hidden myself amongst the branches, and peeped at people as they passed by, and cracked nuts, and eaten the inside, and —— Oh! I should have liked it so much better than being a little girl, and always obliged to do exactly what Miss Upright and Nurse tell me.’

“If you *could* have seen Eina’s face whilst she was thinking all this to herself! She was not a bit like the little Eina who picked up Nurse’s spectacles, because she feared they might get

broken ; but she was walking along with her feet turned in like a crab's, her mouth all pouted out, and such an ugly frown on her face. And then, when she reached the old fir-tree she was so fond of, she threw herself down on the ground beneath its shade with a great jerk, and laid poor Lena down beside her on her face, so that the poor doll could not look at anything. And when Fly spoke to her, saying so gently, 'Bow-wow ! bow-wow !' she only said, 'Oh ! little dog Fly ! I am tired,—go away and don't tease me.' So poor little Fly lay down and barked no more. For some time Eina, Lena, and Fly all lay very quietly under the tree. The sun went on shining so brightly, darting long golden streaks through the branches, looking just like dancing chains of light on the ground. Eina kept watching them, until her eyes seemed to get quite dazzled, and her poor little head very tired.

"The birds kept on singing to her ; the bees kept humming all around ; the stream of water at some distance went on flowing so merrily over the little pebbles and stones, in its way making sweet music to please her ; Lena kept lying on her poor little face ; Fly was fast asleep ; and Eina lay very, very still.







**"She felt something very close to her,—something very soft  
and very warm."—Page 89.**

"All of a sudden she thought she heard a little noise close to her,—something stirring gently amongst the leaves of the tree ; but she felt too tired to look up.

"Presently the little noise seemed to get louder, and she felt something close to her,—something very soft and very warm.

"She put out her hand and touched it, and—lo and behold !—it was the dearest, darlingest, little squirrel she had ever seen. There it sat, looking at her with its great loving, brown eyes ; and then it came nearer and nearer to her, so close it came, that its little bushy tail quite brushed her face, and tickled it so, that it made her laugh.

"But oh ! how surprised was Eina, when, all of a sudden, the little brown squirrel pecked up in her face, and began to smile. Yes ! there was no mistake about it,—the little squirrel was smiling. 'Well !' said Eina, aloud, 'I never saw a squirrel smile before. Did you, Fly ?'

"But Fly was fast asleep, and did not say 'Bow-wow ! bow-wow !' as usual.

"Presently Eina felt more and more surprised, for—what do you think ?—the squirrel began to speak, and he said, 'Eina !' ('How

does he know my name,' thought she). But she smiled, and said, 'Yes, pretty squirrel!'

"So again he said, 'Eina!' but this time he went on speaking, and looking full into her face, said, 'Were you not wishing, just now, to be a squirrel, instead of a little girl?'

"'Yes, I was; but how do you know that?' asked Eina.

"'Never mind how I know it. Little girls or boys should not ask questions. Now, listen very attentively to me. I am going to tell you something which will perhaps please you. You are to become a squirrel, and see how you like it. I am going to change places with you; you are to be a squirrel, and I am to be Eina.'

"'Oh!' said Eina, clasping her hands tight together, 'how delightful! Oh! how happy I shall be!—but how long will it be before I am a squirrel?' As she said the words, she looked down at her feet, and saw that they had turned into little tiny brown paws, covered with hair and long claws. Her hands were the same, and she felt herself getting very, very small. She looked round, and saw, to her delight, that she had a beautiful little brown bushy tail. 'Oh, dear! how I should like to look at my face!' she

thought; so away she ran towards the little stream of water, that she might see her face reflected there. But instead of walking or running, as she hitherto had done, she went scamper, scamper over the ground, so fast, on all fours. It did seem so funny to her, running in this manner, and being able to go so quickly. When she reached the stream, she peeped in, and there saw her face had grown into the dearest little squirrel's face she had ever seen—large dark eyes, little black nose, and long pretty brown ears.

“Back she scampered to the old fir-tree, curling her tail over her back with delight.

“‘How joyful!’ she thought. ‘Now I can climb up that tree, without tearing my dress or my pinafore, and neither Nurse or Miss Upright can scold me; and how surprised mamma and papa will be when they come home and find their little girl is a squirrel!’

“Then all at once she thought, ‘But how will they know I am Eina, for I don’t believe I can talk; and if I can’t talk, I can’t tell them who I am?’

“This made Eina feel very sorrowful; so she went towards Fly and tried to say, ‘Little dog Fly, do you know me?’ But she could only

make a little squeaking noise, which when Fly heard, he opened his eyes, and just shook his head and went to sleep again.

“ ‘ Oh, dear ! ’ sighed poor little Eina to herself, ‘ I don’t like this at all. Fly does not know me, now that I am a squirrel ; and papa and mamma won’t know me either. Oh ! this is very, very sad. ’ She sat still for a little time, and then she thought, ‘ Well, I will run up this tree, and see if I can find any nuts, for I am getting hungry. ’ So up she ran ; and just when she got on the top branch, she saw the brown squirrel, who had changed into Eina, rise up off the ground, pick up Lena, and begin to walk home, whilst Fly went scampering and dancing about, saying ‘ Bow-wow ! bow-wow ! ’ as if so glad to go back to the Castle again. ‘ Ah ! ’ thought poor little Eina, the squirrel, ‘ here I am, left without a friend ! What *am* I to do ? Oh ! how, how I wish I was myself again. I never thought Fly would have forgotten me ! ’ and here the poor little squirrel began to cry. Having cried till she was tired, she dried her eyes with her bushy tail, jumped down on the ground, and ran towards the castle, for she was wanting her tea very badly. Away she ran—so

fast, so fast. It was most delightful to be able to run so quickly without feeling tired, and she enjoyed it very much. 'After all,' she thought, 'it is rather nice to be a squirrel;' so away she scampered, till, all of a sudden, she heard a noise, and, looking round, saw one of the gamekeepers with a gun on his shoulder, and a large dog in front of him, coming towards her. The moment the large dog caught sight of the squirrel, he gave a bark and flew at her. Poor, poor little squirrel! how her heart beat!—she could scarcely run for fear. Closer and closer came the dreadful dog towards her; and she fancied she could almost feel his sharp teeth in her poor little back; when, all of a sudden, she saw a large beech tree, up which she darted, and got out of the way of the terrible animal, who kept jumping up against the tree, barking loudly at her, until the gamekeeper called him away.

"Poor little thing! there she sat, shivering and shaking on the top of the tree, the tears running down her poor little cheeks, and her heart nearly breaking.

"'Oh!' she thought, 'what would my mamma and papa, and Nurse and Miss Upright feel, if they knew their poor little Eina had been nearly

eaten up by old Jerry, who I have so often fed and been kind to? It is very, very hard to bear, and all my own fault too; for if I had only been contented to be a little girl, this would never have happened. But I must go and get something to eat; for I am very, very hungry.'

"Down the tree she ran, and away she went as fast as she could to the garden; for she knew there was plenty of fruit there, and nut-trees also. When she reached it, the great door was shut; but she remembered, now she was a squirrel, that did not matter at all; for she could very quickly climb over the wall, even though it were twice as high. In a moment the pretty little brown thing had reached the top; there, on the top of the wall, she sat for a minute, feeling quite pleased at having got up so quickly. Presently she began to curl up her tail, and sniff, sniff, sniff; for her little black nose told her there were some apricots and green-gages not far off. Along the wall she scampered, till she reached the large apricot tree; and there she sat and eat as many nice apricots as she cared for. When she had finished, and just while she was washing herself, by licking her paws and rubbing them over her little

brown face, she was startled by hearing Old Plant, the gardener, say, 'Tom!—Jack!—where are you? Look! if that little rogue of a squirrel has not been stealing our apricots; that's the way the fruit goes!'

"At this moment up came the very same gamekeeper, with Jerry, the dog who had chased poor Eina in the wood.

"'Good-evening, Mr Plant!' quoth the gamekeeper; 'what are you all staring at?'

"'Why, Mr Trapper, I am watching a little thief of a squirrel, who has been eating up my apricots.'

"'Shall I give it a shot?' asked the keeper, putting the gun to his shoulder.

"'Nay, don't,' said Old Plant; 'the pretty little thing! we can spare it a morsel of fruit. Besides, little Miss Eina, at the Castle, would break her heart if she found one of the pretty squirrels shot.'

"'Oh! very well,' said the gamekeeper, putting down his gun again; 'but you are very stupid, for they are regular little thieves, squirrels, and will eat up all your apricots. Jerry very nearly caught one this afternoon in the wood; and woe betide the poor thing if he had; there would not



have been much left of it now, by this time, I'm thinking.'

"Poor, poor little squirrel! When she heard all this, and knew that the gamekeeper really wanted to shoot her, she did not know what to do. 'Oh!' she thought, 'what have squirrels done, that people should want to shoot them, and dogs to eat them? Oh! how unkind they are! If ever I'm a little girl again, I will be so kind to everybody, so as to show how much nicer it is to be kind than unkind; and I will always try and not stay too long up in the dear little room where I can see the boats sailing along from; and I will be kinder to Miss Upright, and more anxious to please her. But—oh, me! oh, me!'—and here she began to cry again—"I can never, never be a little girl any more." And there the poor little squirrel lay on the top of the wall, sobbing most bitterly, her little brown paws covering her face, and her pretty tail not curled up happily over her back, but hanging down over the side of the wall, all limp and crumpled.

"Whilst she was lying in this sad state, she all of a sudden heard a noise of wheels approaching, and horses trotting very fast; and raising her head, she saw, coming up the avenue, a

carriage drawn by four beautiful grey horses, and her papa and mamma sitting inside.

"From her seat on the wall she could look quite into the carriage as it passed ; and her ears being very sharp (for squirrels can hear very quickly), she heard her mamma say to her papa, 'How surprised dear little Eina will be to see us home again!' and then the carriage whirled along so fast, she could not hear anything more.

" 'Well,' said poor little Eina, 'I am quite sure of one thing, and that is, that I won't stay up here any longer. I must and will go to see my dear mamma.' Down the wall she ran, but she went so fast that she missed her foot, and fell with a splash into a great barrel full of water, which Mr Plant kept there for watering his flowers with.

"Dear, how cold it was ! and how the water kept running into her nose, and eyes, and ears ! She tried to swim, but her tail got so heavy with the water getting into the fur, that it seemed to drag her down ; and in another minute she thought she must be drowned, when she heard footsteps approaching, and up came Old Plant to water his flowers. Slowly and

carefully he let down into the barrel a large green watering-can ; judge of his surprise when, on drawing it out, he saw inside the poor little half-drowned squirrel.

“ ‘ Well, upon my word,’ said the gardener, ‘ if this is not the naughty little squirrel who stole the apricots ! Eh ! you poor thing, but you have met with a severe punishment. I ’m doubting if it will live. Mrs Plant ! Mrs Plant ! come here, my dear.’ Up came, as fast as she could walk, good fat Mrs Plant.

“ ‘ What do you want, husband ?—you seem in a great hurry.’

“ ‘ Look here ! ’ said the gardener ; ‘ guess what I ’ve got in my hands ? ’

“ ‘ Why, a squirrel for sure ! Wherever did you get it, Mr Plant ? ’

“ ‘ In no less a place than my watering-can, Mrs Plant. It seems the little thing had been stealing our apricots—most likely eaten too many—got a headache, or some sort of an ache—felt giddy, and tumbled off the wall, slap into my water-butt.’

“ ‘ Why, now,’ exclaimed Mrs Plant, ‘ if that won’t do for me to tell our Bobby, who is a little inclined to be greedy and take what does

not belong to him. But here! give me the squirrel, and I will take it into the house and put it by the fire to dry.'

"On the hearthrug kind Mrs Plant laid the poor little squirrel, who was nearly half dead with cold and fright, but soon began to get better when it felt the heat from the nice warm fire.

"'Now,' thought poor little Eina, the squirrel, 'I must indeed be quick and run away when Mrs Plant is not looking, or else she will be wanting always to keep me here, and I should not like that one bit.'

"Just as she was wondering how she should manage to escape, and wishing with all her heart Mrs Plant would fall asleep in her chair, instead of watching her so intently, in came Bobby and his sister Annie, who, when they saw the squirrel, flew at it, and began quarrelling who was to have it in their arms. But Mrs Plant told them to leave it alone, for she was going to put it into a cage and keep it there, and then they could watch it through the wires.

"Eina had once seen a canary-bird in a cage, and a dormouse too; and the idea of being made a prisoner of like that was so dreadful, that up

she jumped, her tail standing out very straight behind, and ran towards the door.

“ But Mrs Plant was too quick for her, and had closed the door ere she could reach it.

“ ‘ Why, one would think the creature understood what I said, running off in this way.’

“ ‘ And so I do understand you, you dreadful old woman,’ said Eina to herself; ‘ but I am determined you shall not catch me, and put me into your horrid cruel cage, and never let me get out any more ; at least, if you *are* to catch me’ (and she sighed as she looked round the small room, and saw that both the door and window were shut), ‘ I will give you a good run after me.’ So away she scampered round the room as fast as she could go, with Mrs Plant and the children after her. Oh, me ! what a race it was ! and how fat, old Mrs Plant puffed and panted, and how red and warm she got ! Now Eina, the squirrel, ran under a cupboard, and they poked at her with a horrid stick, till they made all the dust rise from off the floor and nearly choke her ; so then out she sprang very quickly ; and as they were all three sprawling on the floor, staring with all their eyes under the cupboard, she gave a sudden spring into old

Mrs Plant's face, knocking off her cap, and frightening the good woman so much, that she quite forgot to catch her as she bounded past. Then up the window-curtains she ran, and there she sat quietly on the top, and waited until Mrs Plant had taken the trouble to get a ladder, put it against the window, and with great labour and difficulty mounted it, for she was very large and heavy. After cracking one of the steps with her weight, and coming to the ground with a loud thump, she tried again; and just as she had reached the top safely, and was stretching out her hand to catch the squirrel, the little creature gave a spring, rushed down the curtain on to the floor, and kept scampering round and round the room, with Mrs Plant, Bobby, and Annie after her. All of a sudden, Mrs Plant exclaimed, 'Here, children! help me! I've got the bad little thing at last!' And, after a great deal of pulling and tugging behind a large chest of drawers, out came—not the squirrel—but an old fur toy-rabbit, which had been given years ago to Annie, and was now a very disagreeable sight indeed, being covered with dust, cob-webs, and spiders. Mrs Plant screamed on seeing what she had drawn out; and Annie

said, 'Oh! mother, do throw the nasty thing away;' whilst naughty Bobby picked it up in the tongs, and kept running after his mother with it, declaring he would put it on her head, instead of the cap which the squirrel had knocked off.

"In her horror at being pursued by Bobby with the cob-webby, spidery old fur rabbit—for she particularly disliked spiders and dust—Mrs Plant opened the door, forgetting all about the squirrel, and rushed out of the house. On seeing this, Eina scampered after her as fast as she could, and got safely away. 'There!' thought the poor little thing, 'I have escaped from those dreadful people, who would have put me into a cage, and I have escaped from the dog, and the gamekeeper, and the water-barrel. Oh! I do wonder what is to happen to me next? I feel so tired I scarcely know what to do; but I must run to the Castle as hard as I can, that I may see my dear mamma and papa once more. Oh, dear! if I could but be Eina again, how happy I should be! and I would always try to be contented, and never wish to be anything else but what I am.'

"As she was thinking this, who should she see coming along but her dear old Nurse? Poor

little Eina forgot all about being a squirrel, and flew towards her. What was her surprise to feel herself lifted from the ground, and held tight to Nurse's bosom, who kept kissing her forehead, whilst she heard a voice, which she knew was Miss Upright's, saying, 'Poor little darling! the heat has quite overcome her; bring her home quickly, Nurse, and we will put her to bed.'

"The first thing Eina did, on finding herself in Nurse's arms, was to look down at her little brown hairy paws; but they were no longer paws, but little hands; then she kept turning and turning round.

"'What are you twisting and twirling about so for, darling?' asked Nurse.

"'I am looking for my bushy tail, dear Nurse.'

"'For your bushy tail!' exclaimed both Nurse and Miss Upright, in amazement.

"'Yes, my squirrel's tail; don't you know I'm a squirrel?' asked Eina.

"'My dear little child!' said Miss Upright, 'you have been dreaming, and fancied you were a squirrel. We came here a few moments ago, and found you sleeping so soundly, that good



Nurse picked you up in her arms to carry you home, when you awoke.'

"'Oh! then, it is only a dream,' cried poor little Eina, joyfully; 'and Fly has not forgotten me;' for there stood Fly beside her, licking her hands and saying, 'Bow-wow! bow-wow!' 'Am I late for tea, Miss Upright?'

"'No, dear; it is just tea-time; so come along home with us.'

"After tea, Eina told Miss Upright her dream, who listened very attentively to it. When she had finished, the kind governess drew the little girl towards her, and said, 'Well, my darling, I hope it will be a lesson to you never to wish to be anything else but what God would wish you to be—that is, a good, dear little girl. And now, my Eina, you seem so tired, you had better go to bed.'

"And you must go too, my little people," said Miss Sinclair, who also had been listening with great interest to grandmamma's story; "do you know it is nearly eight o'clock, and I am sure grandmamma must be tired."

"Well, I think my throat is just a little weak," said grandmamma, taking off her spectacles; "I did not remember it was such a long story."

"Thank you so very, very much, dear grand-mamma, for telling it to us," said the Twins.

"So you liked hearing it, did you, Twinnies? Well, to-morrow evening, if all is well, I will tell you one," said grandpapa.

"Oh! thank you! thank you, grandpapa! Were there ever such happy twins as we are?" cried out Hilda and Hildebrand.

Whilst Nurse was undressing them, the children tried to tell her about Eina; but I don't think she understood much about it.

After the children were in bed, Aunt Isabel came up-stairs, and stayed with each of them for a little time. And she told them, what made them both so happy, that in a few days grandpapa was going to give a treat to all the little village children, and that they were to have tea in the servants' hall, and then have games and amusements of all kinds in the park; and that Uncle Robert always played with them, and they enjoyed it so much; and Hilda and Hildebrand, and Miss Sinclair and Nursie, might play with them also.

Hilda and Hildebrand dreamt all that night about the dear little village children having this great treat.

The next day, Hilda said to Miss Sinclair, "Twinnie and I have been thinking of something; we have each got a silver shilling,—do you think we might give it to Aunt Isabel to buy some things for the village children with?"

"I am sure you may," said Miss Sinclair; "and it will make you so happy, helping to give these little children some pleasure. You know what the Lord Jesus says—'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" So the Twins each gave their shilling to Aunt Isabel, who kissed them, and said, "Well, now, in return, I have got a great, large pleasure for you;" and into Hilda's hand she put a letter from dear mamma and papa, from the India monkey-place.

Ah! this *was* joy to the children; and after Aunt Isabel had left the room, she was called back to read it to them, although mamma had written it in large printing letters; but they were in such a hurry to hear what she said, that they had not patience to spell it out to themselves.

What a dear, kind, loving mother's letter it was, telling all about the large ship, and the great waves which had tossed it about; and how papa and mamma were constantly thinking of

their little darlings, and praying to God to bless them ; and there were messages for grandmamma and grandpapa, and Aunt Isabel and Uncle Robert, and Miss Sinclair, and Nursie ; and, last of all, wrapped up in two little pieces of paper, with Hilda and Hildebrand's name written on, were two little dried flowers, on which mamma said she and papa had sent a kiss to each of them.

How Hilda and Hildebrand did love and kiss these little withered treasures ! I think papa and mamma would have been so happy if they could have seen their joy.

Nurse and Miss Sinclair both read the letter, and shared in their delight ; and all that day, Hilda and Hildebrand went round the house, showing their beloved letter to all the servants and everyone they met.

When the half-hour before bed-time came, grandmamma came to the school-room and asked Miss Sinclair if the little ones were ready to come down to the drawing-room, as grandpapa was waiting to tell them his story.

" May Miss Sinclair come too, grandmamma," asked Hilda ; " she would enjoy hearing it so much !"

" To be sure she may," said grandmamma.

So down-stairs they all went.

Grandpapa was sitting in his arm-chair by the fire, for the evenings were beginning to get cold ; and when he saw them he said, " Come along, little people ; I am going to tell you a story about Blanche, and Ernest, and a cat.

Grandpapa placed the Twins on his knees, and thus commenced :—

" Why, Blanchie, what is the matter ? " asked Ernest, as he came into the school-room to tea.

" Why are you crying so, my poor little sister ? "

" O Ernest ! don't you know ? Auntie has gone away, and she was so kind and good to us ; and—and—and "—(now little Blanche's tears began to flow faster and faster)—" we shall hear no more nice stories for such a long time."

" Yes, it's very hard to bear, Blanchie, and I don't like it one bit ; but we must not cry about it ; at least, I must not. Men ought never to cry, you know."

" But I'm not a man, Ernest, and I can't help crying ; the tears will keep jumping out, and running down my cheeks ; and I'm sure I don't want them to do so, for if Miss Vowell sees my eyes all red, she will think I am naughty ;

and I am not that, only very, very, very sorry—so sorry that I don't know when I shall ever be happy again."

"What is that you say, Blanche?" said Miss Vowell (who at this moment came into the room)—"that you are never to be happy again! My dear little child, what is the reason of that?"

Then Ernest, like a kind brother, told Miss Vowell how unhappy they both were on account of Auntie having gone away, and their not being able to hear any more stories in the evening before bed-time.

"Oh!" said the kind governess, smiling, "that's it, is it? Well, do you know, my dear little people, that I think perhaps I can make you happy again."

"How? how?" asked the children, jumping and skipping about.

"Come here with me;" and Miss Vowell led them both to a little table with two drawers in it.

"Blanche, open this drawer, and what you find inside it is for you from your Auntie."

Very carefully Blanche did as she was bid, and there, in one corner, lying wrapped up in a piece of silver paper, was a little book, quite full of stories, and Blanche's name written inside.

"O Ernest!" cried out little Blanche, "I don't care for mine if there is not one for you also."

"Ah! but Ernest has a drawer to open also," said Miss Vowell.

With great joy Ernest drew out his drawer, but—fancy his disappointment—on opening it there was nothing inside—no book, no anything to be seen, nothing but emptiness.

"What can I have done with it?" exclaimed Miss Vowell; "I am almost certain I put a book for Ernest from his Aunt in there. Well we must have a good search for it."

To work they all went, peeping and peering and hunting about: great fun it was to the children, for they emptied out Miss Vowell's drawers and boxes; pins and needles, buttons and hooks, cotton and wool, silk and thread, reels and skeins, thimbles and scissors, all lay in a heap on the floors; and Miss Vowell sighed with anguish when she saw the confusion all her things were getting into, but she was obliged to bear it patiently, as she had mislaid the book.

At last, to the delight of the three, it was found, put away in another drawer in Ernest's room.

With all their might and main the children helped poor Miss Vowell to make her work-bas-

kets and places tidy once more; and after tea she promised to read them out of Blanche's book the cat's story.

Tea being finished, and their papa and mamma not being at home, the children could not go down-stairs, so Miss Vowell read the following story out of Blanche's book:—

It was pouring with rain, and not fit for any living thing who ought to be under shelter to be anywhere but in the house; and Mrs Scritch-scratch, a beautiful, large tabby cat, lay stretched out most comfortably on a soft rug before a blazing fire in a charming drawing-room, washing her face with her two pretty little white paws, and purring away as loud as she could all the time. At a rather respectful distance from her lay a little dog. He had long silken hair and large dark eyes; and all the time Pussie was engaged washing her face he was watching her very attentively. At last, getting tired of the *fussation* she was making, and longing for a game of romps instead, he said, rather pettishly, "Dear me, Mrs Scritchscratch! how very dirty your face must be to require such an immense deal of washing. I know I should be



exceedingly sorry if I thought mine required so much ;” and so saying, he looked most admiringly at his own pretty little white chest and paws, and then glanced rather contemptuously at Pussie, which she perceiving, it so irritated her, that she lifted up one paw, and before little Trip (that was the Doggie’s name) was aware she gave him a very sharp box on the ear.

“ Oh ! but I don’t like that at all,” said Trip ; “ please to remember that two can play at that sort of game, and therefore if you do anything to provoke me again, I will just give that long curled-up tail of yours the hardest little nip with my teeth that it has had for many a long day.”

Hardly had he uttered the words, when, with an angry hiss, the cat raised her paw again, and gave Trip a sound box on his other ear.

“ Well,” said the little dog, wofully, “ if you are not the most ill-tempered, cross-grained, horrid, crabbed old cat I ever came across, my name is not Trip.”

“ What is that you say, sir ?” asked Mrs Scritchscratch, rising from the rug and coming towards him, her round eyes flashing, her back all arched up, her tail very large, every claw

out, and looking to poor little Trip a very awful sight indeed. "What is that you say, sir?"

"I am not quite sure that I said anything," he answered; "perhaps you were asleep and thought I spoke."

"No, no; that won't do," she replied; "you said something about my being a cross, ill-tempered, cross-grained *old* cat. Now cross and all that I don't mind, but *old* I will not be called. Why, I am scarcely more than a kitten yet, and can jump, and play, and catch a mouse, and run up a tree, when you can do nothing but whine, whine, and envy me!"

"My dear Scritchscratch, pray"——

"Scritchscratch indeed!" interrupted the cat; "please remember your manners, and don't go Scritchscratching me. Just remember my age—I mean my superiority to you. Scritchscratch, indeed!" she murmured, angrily; "I'll Scritchscratch you, Mister Trip, if you don't take care."

"Oh! but I will take care, Mrs Scritchscratch," answered the poor little dog, who was tired of all this squabbling; "pray forgive me, and do let us be friends again, and then I will tell you of the fine mouse's nest I found yesterday."

"A mouse's nest, Trip! Well, after all, you

are not a bad little dog. Where is it, dear friend ? I am sure I know every rat-hole and mouse-hole in this house, so it must be out of doors."

"Yes, it is, Mrs Scritchscratch; and to-morrow, if it is not raining, I will take you to it. In the meantime I am going to ask you a favour."

"Indeed ! what is it ? I shall be glad to do anything to please you, Trip," said the cat, curling up her whiskers with joy, as she thought of her fun with the mouse's nest on the morrow.

"Well, then," said the little dog, settling himself snugly on the rug, "do tell me your history. You once, a long time ago, promised me you would, and you have never done so; and you can't think how certain I am that you must have plenty of funny things to tell me; for I know how clever and sly you are, and how cleverly you can catch mice, and how bravely you go out poaching at night, and never get found out. Come, do be kind, dear Mrs Scritchscratch, and tell me a pretty story. You don't know how much I delight in hearing your voice when you are pleased and good-tempered."

"What an inquisitive little dog you are, Trip, to want so much to know about me ! But as it is so pouring with rain, and we can't get out to

the mouse's nest, why I don't mind if I do tell you my history; but some parts of it are very sad, Trip, and harrow my feelings dreadfully."

"Oh! well, you can skip those parts," replied Trip; "I only care for the fun. I could not bear to see you looking distressed."

After gazing for a few moments into the fire, as if to collect her thoughts, the cat thus commenced:—

"I was not born in this house, although I came here when I was a very small kitten; but my first little home was in a stable, and a very comfortable little home it was. In a drawer in a snug, warm little room where the harness was kept, there was where my mother made her little nest; and although I say it, who shouldn't, I don't believe, in the whole country, there could be found four prettier, sweeter little kittens than my brothers and sister and myself. The first thing that I can remember, was feeling a dreadful pain run through my sides, just as if I had been pinched between the door, and a shrill little voice called out, 'O mamma! mamma! come here quickly, and look at these dear darling little kittens.' It rather pleased me to hear ourselves called dear little darlings; but oh! if children would only be

content to look at us, instead of picking us up in their tiresome little fingers, squeezing our poor little ribs to pieces with their ugly, hard grip, bumping us down on the ground again, instead of putting us softly back on the straw or on the carpet ; and then the little stupids wonder why we mew so ! It makes me so vexed, when I think of it, I should like to scratch them, and see how they enjoy being hurt, and whether they would not mew too.

“ As we grew older, we used to have grand fun, playing one with the other, and hunting for mice in the barn. I believe I was rather a mischievous little cat ; at least, I used to make the others laugh very much. I remember so well one day : it was rather warm, and the old coachman had taken off his cap whilst he was cleaning the harness. Thinks I to myself, that’s a very cosy-looking nest ; if it fits old Coachy’s head, I don’t see why it should not fit mine ; and inside it I crept, and soon fell fast asleep. I don’t know how long I had been sleeping, when I was awoke by feeling myself seized up in the air, and in another moment, I knew by the warmth and by the hair which got twisted round my claws, that I was on the top of Mr Jehu’s head. Alack-a-day !

My dear Trip, how the good old man did hop about and scream, when he felt me tugging at his hair ! The more he danced up and down and tried to shake me off, the tighter I clung on, and the harder I clawed his hair. At last, I fancy, I must have scratched him a little too hard ; for, giving me a good pinch, he tore me off his head, and quite tossed me back into our nest again ; and I heard him muttering to himself, " You little mischief, you, I won't keep you here much longer."

" That very afternoon, a lady came into the stable, and I heard her say, ' Coachman, have you not got some little kittens ?'

" ' Yes, ma'am ; some little beauties. Would you like one ?'

" ' That I should. I came here on purpose to ask for one.'

" ' Then you shall have this one,' said the old man, picking me out of the drawer ; ' she is the oldest and best-grown of the lot.'

" The lady seemed so pleased, but I was angry with old Coachy for wanting to get rid of me (although I was glad to get away and see a little of the world) ; so just as he was handing me to the lady, did I not give him a good scratch on his hand ? He did not like to be a baby and cry

out, but I could not help purring away to myself, for I knew I had hurt him, and I meant to do so ; for it was not kind of him wanting to send me away from my dear mother, and brothers, and little sister, just because I had played him a trick and got inside his cap.

“ But it was not kind of you to scratch him,” said Trip ; “ we should not hurt people because they hurt us.”

“ Well, Master Trip, I was only a kitten then, and did not know better. Of course, now that I am a grown-up cat, I would rather be hurt ever so many times than do anything to pain another. However, to go on with my story. The lady carried me home in her muff (such a nice warm place it was !) And oh ! how kind she was to me—such nice good milk she gave me ! and such a comfortable basket by the side of the kitchen-fire ! I should have been as happy as the day was long in that kitchen if it had not been for the cook, who was very cross to me. One morning she caught me drinking some very delicious cream, which she had poured into a jug for my master and mistress’s breakfasts ; and—would you believe it ?—she actually whipped me for doing so, and called me a thief. Such a dis-

graceful name ! However I punished her for doing so.

“What did you do ?” asked Trip.

“Why, the next day there was a dinner-party, and my master bought some nice little fish, and the cook was getting them ready to send into the dining-room, when she went out of the kitchen for a moment. I watched my opportunity, and calling another young cat in, who lived close by, we set to work, and eat them up, heads, tails, and everything, so that nothing was left for the company !”

“But, do you know, I think that was rather greedy,” interrupted Trip.

“I wish you would not make disagreeable remarks, Master Trip ; but you are only a silly little dog, and don’t know any better ; perhaps, however, you would rather I stopped.”

“Oh ! no ; pray go on. I want to hear what the cook said.”

“Now, Trip, do you think we were so silly as to wait and be caught by old Mrs Cook ? Not a bit of it ; we knew better than that, and off I and my friend went as fast as we could, and great fun we had poaching half that night in the woods. We got lots of little partridges, and very



good they were; but, sad to relate, my dear friend Nimble, who was more greedy than I was, would go and taste a piece of some sort of meat hanging up on a tree. (I certainly did tell him, if it was good, to bring me a morsel of it, but I would not have done so had I known what the consequences would be.) Just as he was walking quietly up to it, I heard a snap, and a cry from poor Nimble; and there he was caught fast in a horrid steel thing called a trap, and at the same moment a great dog bounded up, caught him by the neck, gave him one little shake, and he never moved again. Poor, poor Nimble! But I was very glad I escaped. You see, if I had been greedy, and gone for the meat, I should have suffered his fate."

"Come, come," said Trip, angrily; "I told you to skip the harrowing parts. I can't bear to hear about painful things. I want to know how you escaped from the great dog."

"Why, I got up a high tree, but the dreadful creature came barking and jumping up at me. However, fortunately the gamekeeper, who was with him, catching sight of me, and struck, I fancy, by my appearance (for you know, Trip, I'm a very handsome cat), called him off, and I got home safely."



"The gamekeeper, struck, I fancy, by my appearance, called him off."—*Page 130.*



"I suspect, Mrs Scritchscratch," said Trip, laughing, "he saw the collar and little bell round your neck that your kind mistress put on, and knew she should be very angry if he killed you."

"Well, any way, I escaped, Trip; and you ought to be very thankful I did."

"And so I am," replied the kind-hearted little dog; "I should indeed be sorry if you got trapped or killed; but do take warning, and don't go out too much at night."

"Mind your own business, Trip," replied the cat, crossly, "and I'll take care of myself."

"The next morning, when I got home, and was just coming in at the kitchen-door, what do you think that unkind old cook did to me?—emptied a whole bucketful of the coldest, dirtiest water she could find all over my fur. Oh! how I disliked both it and her; and as I scampered off, she called out after me, 'That's for stealing my fish last night, you thieving creature you!' Ah! I thought, I will punish you for that, you most disagreeable cook; so up-stairs to her room I ran, and got right in between the blankets on her bed, and soon was nice and dry. But the cold ducking I got was a great shock to my constitution; in fact, I've never quite got over it, and have been

rather delicate in my chest ever since. I dare say you have noticed how badly I cough sometimes, and how our mistress always gives me such nice cream when I do."

"I sometimes think that is why you cough so often, Scritchscratch."

"Do you want a box on your ear, Trip?" asked pussie, angrily.

"No, thank you, not just at present, dear madam. Please go on with your history."

"Do you know, Trip," said the cat, thoughtfully, "it often seems so curious to me why some people should dislike us so much, and others be so good and kind to us. I can never forget how cross that cook was. If a plate was broken, she laid the blame on me; if a drop of milk was spilt, it was 'the cat has done it;' and lots of other untrue and unkind things she said. But I am glad to say she has gone now; and, besides, I should be entirely out of her power, even if she was here, for you see my kind mistress keeps me always with her. But what makes me say I wonder why some people dislike us so much is, that one day an old lady called to see our mistress, and was shown into this room. I was lying on the rug alone, and being glad to see some-

body come in, I jumped up on her knee. Oh! how she pushed me off; and if I came near her, she struck at me with her parasol, and kept saying, '*Shoo cat! shoo cat!*' in such an ugly way. When our mistress came into the room, I went out, and, to my sorrow, I soon saw the disagreeable old lady was going to stay some time, for on the hall-table lay wrapped up in paper her best new cap—at least, I guessed it was, for I saw some ribbons hanging out—so, to make sure, I scratched open the paper with my claws, and found I was right. Such a grand, large, soft, comfortable-looking cap it was! So into it I got, and there I lay comfortably for a long time, purring away as loud as I could, when suddenly the door opened, and out came the old lady. Oh! my dear Trip, my head tingles now when I think of the smart tap she gave me on it, and her voice still rings in my ears as she screamed out, '*This horrible, horrible cat, and four terrible kittens, in my lovely new cap!*' It was quite true, Trip; but I would have done the same for her had she been in my place, and not made such an unkind fuss about it; instead of which, I and my dear little children were all turned out, and what became of the old lady and her

new cap I never knew, for she never came to the house again. But, Trip, see, it has stopped raining; suppose we go and look for the mouse's nest?"

The children laughed very much over grandpapa's story, and Hilda said she would like to have little Trip for her very own little dog, but Mrs Scritchscratch she thought a naughty, greedy pussie.

"I tell you what, dears," said grandpapa; "you must scritch-scratch off to your beds, or else papa and mamma will not like stories being told you if they keep you up too late."

"Are you going to cut mamma's letter in two, so that you may each have a piece under your pillow to-night?" asked Uncle Robert, after the children had said good-night.

"No," answered Hildebrand, proudly; "do you think we could spoil our mamma's letter? My Twinnie is to have the inside, and I am to have the envelope. We made up our minds to that, Uncle Robert, this morning."

"Oh! did you?" said Uncle Robert, smiling. "Well, good-night again, and God bless you, darlings!"

"Miss Sinclair," said the Twins, as they were going up-stairs, "please may we write to-morrow to our mamma and papa?"

"Yes, dears, that you may," said Miss Sinclair.



## CHAPTER VII.

"HILDEBRAND!" said Hilda, calling from her little bed the next morning; but she got no answer, so she cried again, "*Hildebrand!*"

"Yes, Twinnie."

"Do you know what day this is?"

"Thursday, is it not? No, Saturday. No, Thursday."

"Yes, it's Thursday, and it's—— O Hildebrand! don't you remember it's the village children's treat?"

"So it is! how joyful!" exclaimed the little boy. "Oh! let us be quick and get dressed."

"Nursie has not come yet," said Hilda. "I think she is very long this morning; and Miss Sinclair is fast asleep still."

Presently Nursie came, and presently Miss Sinclair awoke, and very soon our little Twinnies were dressed.

It was a busy day. Hilda and Hildebrand helped Aunt Isabel to gather flowers out of the conservatory to put amongst the plates of cakes

and bread and butter which were spread for the children in the servants' hall.

At two o'clock, up they all came, about sixty little boys and girls, all dressed so neatly, and looking so clean. They bowed and courtesied to grandpapa and grandmamma, who stood in the hall, and who told them how much they hoped they would enjoy themselves.

After they had said grace, Uncle Robert and Aunt Isabel, and Miss Sinclair and Nursie, helped them to cups of tea, and cake and bread and butter, and all sorts of good things to eat, and the Twins helped to wait on them also.

After they had eaten as much as they could, and said grace again, Uncle Robert spoke to them for a little. He told them how, more than eighteen hundred years ago, the Lord Jesus Christ had come down from heaven to save sinners; how He had been born a little helpless baby, that He might be able to know how the youngest and tiniest little child felt; how when He was a boy He was always helping His father and mother, and being obedient to them, and when He became a man how He went about always doing good—opening the eyes of the poor blind people, healing the sick, making dead people come to

life again, saying kind loving words to those who were unhappy, weary, and heavy-laden; and then ended by dying for all of us—dying a cruel death on the cross, that by His blood we might be made clean, washed from all our sins, and live in heaven for ever.

“Dear, dear children,” said Uncle Robert, looking *so* kindly on the many little faces turned to his,—“dear, dear children, do make this Lord Jesus your friend; give Him your hearts. The only gift from you He cares for is your love—give it to Him. He has done so much—oh! so very much—for you; and His promise is, ‘I will love them that love me, and those that seek me early *shall* find me.’ Now, my children,” said Uncle Robert, “I’ve finished my sermon; off with you into the park, and be as happy as English boys and girls can be.”

Away they all went, and Hilda and Hildebrand, and Nurse and Miss Sinclair, with them.

Oh! what races, and games, and romps they had! and what shouts of laughing there were when Uncle Robert suddenly appeared with a long stick, with a crook at one end, in his hand, and, pretending he was a great giant, ran after the children, catching hold of their ankles with

his hook, generally making them fall flat on the grass, and then saying, in his kind, funny voice, "Why, what stupid little children! what *very* stupid little children you are!"

During their amusement a sound of music was heard, and on looking to see where it came from, there by the front door stood a poor little boy, with a hand-organ and some little white mice.

"Poor little fellow!" said Aunt Isabel; "have you come far to-day?"

"Yes, ma'am!" he said; but he could not speak English very well. And Uncle Robert said he was a foreigner, and told Nurse to get him some hot tea and bread and butter.

After he had eaten it, Hilda and Hildebrand gave him a piece of cake and an apple, which they each had, and then he went away.

Soon after he had gone, Aunt Isabel said she thought it was time for all the children to go too. So, after getting some gingerbreads and nuts, and singing a hymn, the village children went home.

"This has been a very happy day, Aunt Isabel," said Hildebrand; "but I feel very sorry for the poor little organ-boy. Where did he come from?"

"From Italy, I think, dear."

"Is that a great, great way off?" asked Hilda.

"A long way off," said Aunt Isabel. "Ah! poor little fellow, I daresay his would be a very interesting story, if we only could hear it."

"O Auntie!" said the children, seizing her hands, "do, do tell us his story before bedtime."

"But how can I, dears, when I don't know it?"

Hilda and Hildebrand looked grave and puzzled for a minute, but, suddenly brightening, said, "Couldn't you tell us what you *think* his story would be, if he had told it?"

"I will tell you what I will do," said Aunt Isabel. "I can't tell you a story about this little boy, but I will tell you one that I have imagined to myself about another one. Some of it is true, but not all; still, I think you will like it. However, I don't promise to tell it to-night, for I am rather tired, but to-morrow or next day, perhaps, I will."

The next day, however, Aunt Isabel had to go away for a week, so the Twins were not able to hear her story as soon as they hoped. And,

would you believe it, this made Hildebrand so cross, that he took Miss Sinclair's work out of her work-basket, and tossed it right out of the window. When Hilda saw this, she picked up Miss Sinclair's scissors, and threw them into the fire! And then they both laughed, and said it was great fun, and that, as they could not have their story, they must amuse themselves.

When Miss Sinclair came into the room, and found her work gone, she asked if they knew what had become of it.

Hildebrand grew very red, and for a minute thought he would say no; but, oh! I am so glad to say he did not. Looking at her with his eyes full of tears, he said, "I threw it out of the window, for I was cross."

"And my scissors," said Miss Sinclair. "Why, they are gone too."

"I put them in the fire," said Hilda, in a low voice.

"My dear little children, how *could* you be so naughty and unkind?" asked their governess.

Then they told how cross they had been, because Aunt Isabel had been obliged to go away without telling them their story.

After Miss Sinclair had explained to them

how very wrong and impatient they had been, she told them she must punish them ; and that they must go to bed directly after tea, instead of going to the drawing-room.

This was a great punishment ; but still Hilda and Hildebrand felt they deserved it, and I'm glad to say they did not cry or make a fuss, but bore their punishment patiently.

In a few days Aunt Isabel returned, and one evening she told them the promised story.

#### THE LITTLE ITALIAN BOY AND HIS MONKEY.

*(Founded on fact.)*

And this is how she began :—

Oh ! how cold it was ; there was a bitter east wind blowing, and hail was falling, and Jack Frost had come, and was freezing the water in the jugs inside the house, and the water in the pipes and barrels outside the house, and nipping people's fingers, and making little children's hands and noses so red and achy, when a little boy was to be seen standing just opposite the windows of a large house in a long wide street in London. It was New Year's Day, and there

were a great many happy children in that house, all looking forward to having snap-dragon, and seeing the magic lantern in the evening, and they took no notice of the poor little shivering boy, or the poor shivering little monkey standing beside him on the pavement. Perhaps, thought the boy, they don't know I am here, but how should they if I don't tell them? So, with a great deal of difficulty, for his hands were so benumbed with cold he could scarcely feel he had any, he drew from under his jacket a little flute, and putting it to his lips, played a very sweet little air upon it.

The poor little monkey looked in his face, with a pair of such melancholy eyes, as much as to say, "Am I to dance?" and then tried to jump up and down on the pavement, but was too cold and stiff to do so; so, after trying for a little, he gave a spring and jumped on his master's shoulder, burying his poor little black paws in the boy's long black curling hair, to try and get them a little warmer.

After playing one air the boy stopped; then, on seeing no one came, he was just turning away, when he thought, "No, I will give them one more; I must try and play louder." He



rubbed his lips for a moment, for they felt so hard and cold, and then putting the flute to his mouth, played one more air.

Still, nobody seemed to hear him ; and the tears came into his eyes when he thought how little money he had made that day, and how hungry he was ; and he was just on the point of walking away down the street, when he heard the window open, and on looking back, saw two or three children all signing to him.

Back he ran, and, to his great delight, they gave him some pennies and a large piece of bread, half of which he immediately gave to the monkey, who, on receiving it, bowed his head and kissed his hand to the children.

"Poor little boy !" said one of them, "you look very cold, and so does your poor little puggy. Where do you live, and where have you come from ?"

But to this question the boy only shook his head, and, smiling, said, "*Non comprendo.*"

"Oh ! he does not understand us," said the children to one another ; "he must be an Italian." So they smiled and nodded to him, shut down the window, saying, they were "quite sure two Jack Frosts had come that afternoon, for it was

so very cold," and then all went back to their play.

Yes, the children were right; it was poor little Jacopo, an Italian boy, who had come all the way from Italy with his monkey and two marmots, to try and make some money by showing the poor little animals, and by playing on his flute.

Jacopo's mother was very poor, and his father was very ill, and not able to work and get any money, and there were a good many brothers and sisters to be fed, and clothed, and cared for; so Jacopo thought, if only I could go away and make a little money for myself, then my brothers and sisters could have my share of breakfast, dinner, and supper, which would keep them, and then in a few years I might go back to them quite rich, and put my mother into a nice shop, and get my father good medicine to make him well. Every night, when Jacopo was lying on the old wooden sofa which he had for his bed, and when the others were fast asleep, he used to think all this over and over to himself, and wonder and wonder how he could get away, and where he could go to.

Now, there was a poor fisherman, called Fran-

cesco, who lived near the little hut where Jacopo and his people lived, and once, when he was a boy, he had gone to England with some marmots and white mice and an organ, and had made some money, and come home again to Italy, able to buy some nets, with which he caught fish, and earned a livelihood by selling them. So Jacopo went to him, and told him what he wanted to do, and Francesco advised him to go to England; and he gave him a present of his monkey and the flute, and taught him to play several pretty tunes. And an old woman, who had two young marmots which had belonged to a little dead grandchild of hers, gave them also to Jacopo, and several of the neighbours gave him a few sous, and some got him employed to run messages for the fishermen, and to help to carry their baskets on market-days, with the fish in them, to sell. And thus he earned a little money—quite enough, he thought, to take him to England.

So one day he bade his father and mother, and little brother and sisters, and all the neighbours, good-bye, and off he started for England. Poor child! it was a long time before he reached London—Francesco had told him to go to London;

but at last he got there. People had been very kind to him. Sometimes they took him in their boat, and then in a cart, and then he walked; and he had always managed, by making Carlo, his monkey, dance, and showing the marmots, to get a few pence; and very often, when he played on his flute, people gave him a piece of bread, and sometimes cheese.

When he first got to London, he felt very frightened at the noise, and seeing so many people, and not being able to understand a word anyone said; and if it had not been that he wanted so much to make some money for his father and mother, he would have tried to get home again. At night he slept in a wretched place, with a number of other little dirty boys, who used very often to tease him, and laugh at him, and try to torment poor Carlo and the little marmots.

Jacopo found it very cold in London, and so did the poor marmots; and one day the prettiest of the two, and the one which Jacopo loved best, for he had called it Annita, after his little baby-sister at home, got very ill and died. The rude boys who were in the room with the poor little Italian, laughed at him when they saw him cry-

ing over the dead marmot : and when he was not looking, being so full of grief and sorrow, they stole his bread, and an apple which belonged to Carlo, so that the poor boy and his monkey had to go to sleep without any supper.

Jacopo, when he got up the next morning, made up his mind that he would leave London, and try and find some other town, not so large, and where it would be warmer. Poor little fellow ! he did not know that it was always cold in England in January.

As he was walking along very sadly, with Carlo on his shoulder and the little remaining marmot buttoned up warm inside his jacket, he saw a lady coming towards him, with such a kind face, that he thought to himself, " I am sure that lady is good ; I will ask her to buy my marmot, for I am certain she will take care of it ; then it won't die of cold, and I shall have some money for my journey." So he went up to her, and, showing the little marmot, said, "*Buy ?*" for he had picked up one or two English words. The lady smiled very kindly at him, and said, " Are you an Italian ?" to which question Jacopo nodded his head. Oh ! fancy how pleased he was when the lady spoke to him in his own

language, and asked him to tell her what he wanted.

Jacopo told her how poor his mother was, and how ill his father was, and how he had come to England to make some money to take home, and would she buy the marmot, for the other one had died from cold, and he would be so glad of the money.

The lady said, "Come with me;" and she walked before him down the street, until she came to a house, of which she opened the door and led poor little Jacopo, with Carlo on his shoulder, into a nice snug room, with a warm fire blazing in one corner. "Now," she said, "I will buy your marmot; I will give you four shillings for it"—(how delighted Jacopo was!)—"and I will give you a good breakfast." Poor Jacopo! how he did enjoy the nice hot coffee and the bread which the kind lady got for him; and how Carlo did crack and eat the nuts she gave him! Then the lady spoke to him about God, but, poor little boy, he knew scarcely anything about Him. So she made Jacopo sit down beside her, and told him what a kind loving Saviour he had, and how He was always watching over him; and that, if Jacopo would only

ask Him, He would lead him, and guide him, and keep him from all harm ; and how he must love and trust God, and always try to do right, to please Him. Then she told him, as well as she could in Italian, what a happy place heaven was, and how she hoped it would be his home some day.

Jacopo listened, and the large tears came into his eyes, and ran down his pale thin cheeks ; his heart felt so much happier, now that he knew there was the great God overhead watching over him, and caring for him, and who would be his friend.

Jacopo thanked the kind lady very much, and wanted her to take the marmot without giving him any money for it, but she would not. After filling his pockets with bread, she opened the door, and let Jacopo out. Away the little boy went, with Carlo now buttoned up in his jacket, for the poor little thing was shivering with cold. Jacopo wanted so much to get out of London, that he walked very quickly, and after a long time he got on a road, away from the houses, and on and on he walked. The poor child did not know where he was going, but he asked God to guide him, and on he went. He thought, if

he could only get to a small town or village, he might get some work to do, or that there would not be so many rough boys to tease him. Once when he was sitting down, a woman gave him a glass of milk, and he gave Carlo some, and ate some of the kind lady's bread. Now and then he tried to ask where the road would lead to, but he could not make himself understood. That night he and Carlo slept in a pig-sty. There was an old pig-sty by the side of the road, with some straw in it, and the two slept in it very soundly. You see Jacopo wanted to save his money for his mother, or else he might have paid a few pennies, and got a night's lodging somewhere. When he awoke the next morning, he divided the bread the lady had given him between himself and Carlo, then he knelt down, and looked up to the sky, and asked the great God to bless him, and on he went. Sometimes he would get a ride in a cart, and once some people gave him something to eat after playing on his flute; but his poor little heart was beginning to feel very heavy, and his legs very tired. Then it began to snow, and the wind got up, and he found it very difficult to walk, for his feet were so stiff and cold; so he sat down for a short time on a



stone by the road-side, but the wind pierced through and through him, and he rose up, and went on walking to keep himself warm. He could see no houses near, nothing but snow, for it was falling so fast and thick that all the ground was covered, and the wind kept blowing it up into his face, so that he was nearly blinded. Poor little Carlo cuddled closer and closer to him under his jacket, and then lay very still.

And now Jacopo found it was getting so dark he could see nothing. He had no idea where he was, or what he had better do, and his legs and head and heart ached sadly. On and on he tried to go, but several times he fell down, and he felt so cold and sleepy, he thought he would just sit down for a little bit where he was and rest.

Under a great tree, on the soft snow, poor little Jacopo laid himself down. It was not quite so cold now; the wind did not blow so hard; and Jacopo said to himself, "I am beginning to feel more comfortable." Then he thought of the little home he had left, and he fancied he could feel his father and mother and little brother and sisters kissing him, and he raised up his head to see, but it was only the snow-flakes falling softly and gently on his forehead. He felt for Carlo,

and the little creature was lying close to his chest, with his rough head tucked under his master's chin. Then Jacopo thought of the kind lady, and what she had told him about God being his friend, and he clasped his hands together and said, "Oh! great God, let me go home again!" and the snow went on falling so softly, so softly! and the boy lay very still. He was sleeping soundly!

The next morning, it had stopped snowing, but the ground and the trees and the tops of the houses were all one mass of white—it was so deep that the people had to sweep it from their doors, and even then they could scarcely walk out.

Later in the day the sun came out, and the snow glistened and sparkled, and looked so lovely. Two men were walking along as best they could, and they said one to another, "What a snow-storm we have had! I remember nothing like it for years. Neither man nor beast could have lived out in such a night as last night was." As they talked to one another, nearer and nearer they came to the tree under which Jacopo lay down the evening before. Not a word did they speak, but they looked in each other's faces, and silently but quickly walked up to the spot.

There, under the snow, lay dear little Jacopo. God had heard his prayer, and taken him home. His cap had fallen off ; there was a happy smile on his face ; his hands were clasped together, and close to his bosom lay the little monkey, dead also.

Tenderly and carefully the men raised the little boy, and he was buried in a pretty corner of their old churchyard. Many wept as they put him in the grave, although they knew not whence he had come, or what was his name.

One day the kind lady in London read in the newspaper that a little foreign boy, with a monkey and flute, had been found dead under the snow, and she wondered whether it could be Jacopo, but never knew. And Jacopo's father, and mother, and little brother and sisters, are expecting him to return ; but they must go to him—he can never go back to them.

When Aunt Isabel had finished, she saw that the tears were running down both Hilda and Hildebrand's faces. " O Auntie ! " they asked, " is that really true ? "

" Part of it is, dears. Once, many years ago, long before you two were born, I was staying with some friends, and the cold was so intense



**"His hands were clasped together, and close to his bosom lay the little monkey, dead also."—Page 164.**



(it was the winter-time) that the little birds were quite frozen to death ; and I am grieved to say, that one morning a little foreign boy, with his monkey, was found dead on the ground, half hidden by the snow. I can scarcely bear to think of it," added Aunt Isabel.

Just then grandpapa came into the room, and seeing the children's sorrowful faces, said, "Do you know, it is not your bed-time yet; and as you seemed to like the cat's story so much, I have remembered another one for you, called 'The Swallow's Story.' Do you think you would like to hear it?"

"Yes, yes, grandpapa," said both the children ; "indeed we should."

Just as grandpapa was going to begin, a knock came at the door, and Nursie appeared to ask Hilda to come and let her try on a little dress she was making for her.

Now, if there was anything the little girl disliked, it was having new dresses tried and fitted on. Nurse kept her so long standing without doing anything, putting in a pin here and taking out a pin there, cutting out a piece of the frock with such cold scissors, that they made Hilda creep all over when they touched her skin

However, Hildebrand said, "Dear little Twinnie, grandpapa won't tell the story until you come back ; and, Nursie, you won't keep her very long, will you ?"

"Oh !" said Nursie, kindly, "it will soon be your bed-time ; so if grandpapa is going to be so kind as tell you a tale, I will try on Miss Hilda's dress to-morrow."

"Thank you very much, Nurse," said Hilda.

"And thank you, Nurse," said grandpapa.

Now for "The Swallow's Story."

Up-stairs in the school-room sat the children, longing for papa and mamma and auntie to have finished dinner, and down-stairs sat auntie, thinking to herself it is nearly half-past seven, I shall have no time before the children's bed-hour to tell them their story, when mamma's voice was heard saying, "Now, Blanchie and Ernest, we are ready for you." Scamper, scamper, down-stairs, but into the drawing-room they walked quietly.

"Well, my little ones, what am I to tell you about to-night ?"

"Oh ! please, auntie, is it not to be the swallow's story ?"

"The swallow's story it shall be then, Blanchie. Sit there, and Ernest sit here; but first give me my spectacles and my knitting, then I will begin. I see there is just about half-an-hour before bed-time."

There was once a little boy called Ivoe. He had no kind papa or mamma; they had both died when he was a teeney-tiney; but he had an old aunt who loved him very much, and he lived with her. It was just a little wee bit dull at times for Ivoe, for there were no little children for him to play with, and all the people about the place were old; but still Ivoe was not a silly, stupid, idle boy, and he could amuse himself very nicely. He had a good, sharp knife, and he used to get pieces of cork and cut out little houses, which he gummed on card-board; and he cut baskets out of cherry-stones, and funny little dogs out of tamarind-stones; and he planted and hoed and raked in his garden, and took long walks with Bruno and Bogie, his two doggies; and when he did his lessons, he tried to do them well. His great joy and delight was to have stories told to him, no matter who by—if it was an old man, or woman, or little child—if they would only tell him a story, he was happy; and



often he would look at the different animals out of doors, and wish and wish with all his little heart that they could speak to him, and tell him the pretty tales which he felt certain they told to one another.

One fine warm summer's day, his kind old aunt—"Was she like you, Auntie?" asked the children. "Perhaps she was, dears," answered Auntie; "but let me go on with my story, or it won't be finished before bed-time")—Well, his kind old aunt saw him looking up to the roof of the house, where, close to a lead pipe, a pair of swallows were flying and twittering about, and she heard him saying to himself, "Oh! little swallows, what would I not give to hear your story! I should like, oh! so, so much to know what you did with yourselves, and where you went to, all the winter, and why you have come back again to that old pipe, for you were there last summer." Now, thought Mrs Lovechick (that was the name of the child's aunt), Ivoe is a dear little fellow, and tries to please me; I will try to give him some pleasure. Suppose I go and make up a story about the swallow, and tell it to him this evening.

When the evening came, she called Ivoe, and

said, "Would my boy like to hear the swallow's story?"

"Oh! that he would," said Ivoe, growing very red with delight, and hugging his aunt till he made her groan.

"Well now, Ivoe, you must imagine to yourself that I am the swallow, whilst I tell you the story."

"O Auntie! that will be very hard work, for you are so much, much larger than a bird, and where are your wings? and where is your tail? and your pretty little feet, with black claws at the end? and your beak? and your——but I *will* try and believe you are a bird; so go on, Auntie, please."

Then she began—

On a bed beside an open window lay a little pale-faced girl. She was very, very ill, and would never be able to walk about again; but she was *so* good and patient. The sun was streaming in brightly on her bed, and the sweet smell of the flowers was wafted up to her every now and then by a gentle breath of wind from the garden underneath. All at once her eyes sparkled with delight, and she tried to raise herself up on her pillow, for there on the window-

sill sat looking at her the dear little swallow, whom she had not seen for a long time.

"Oh! my dear little bird," exclaimed the sick child, "what joy it is to see you again! I have missed you so much. I once thought I should not live to see you any more. Do come on to my pillow, and tell me all you have done and seen since you left me—tell me everything, from the very beginning."

"From the very day I left you?" asked the swallow.

"Yes," answered the child.

"Well, if you remember the evening I came to your window to say good-bye, it was getting cold, and the leaves on the trees were changing their colour, and the days were shorter, and you were beginning to cough, and I and my little ones thought it quite time to go away to a warmer country. A great many more swallows were preparing to leave their homes, so I made up my mind to go with them. We started very early one morning, and I cannot tell you how hard it was to leave our little nest, where we had all been so happy; and I kept thinking of you, little sick child, and wondering why you did not fly with us to the warm country we were going to."

"Did you get to that far-away land all in one day, Swallow?" asked the child.

"Ah, no, it took us many, many days, and sometimes we got so tired. Some of the other swallows used to quarrel, and were so disagreeable, that I and my wife and children left them, and flew on faster by ourselves. Whenever we could, we would try and sleep in a farm-yard on a stack, for then there were plenty of things to be picked up for our supper and breakfast. The cats and rats were our great enemies. They used to watch us so closely, that I almost dreaded going to sleep, lest I should wake and find one of our children carried off. Once we got a great fright. Our youngest little swallow, called Martin, was so weary, that in spite of all I could say, he lay down flat on the ground, and would not move. We chirped and twittered to him to get up, but he could not stir, and I thought I should have died of fright on seeing a large black cat staring at him, and settling itself to pounce down upon our poor little bird. We all hid our heads under our wings, not to see the dreadful sight, when suddenly we heard a scream, too loud to have come from a swallow, and on looking up saw such a nice kind little boy hold-

ing Martin gently in his hands. He had frightened the cat away, and saved our child's life. How we did love him, and we twittered as loud as we could to tell him so ; but he never listened to us—only ran away with the little bird. 'Oh dear !' I thought, 'it is "out of the frying-pan into the fire."' We shall never see Martin again. He will be locked up in the dreadful thing called a cage, and his heart will break with pining to get to us.' However, I determined to try and find out where he was ; so away I flew towards a large farm-house at some distance from where we were. I got on to the roof, and peeped through many windows, but could see nothing of my child. At last, just as I had given up the idea of ever seeing him again, I heard voices, and looking through a sky-light, saw the little boy, with another child standing beside him, watching poor little Martin, who was flying from side to side of a horrible prison, and beating himself against the wires. I think my fluttering and chirping made them look up, and the dear children had kind hearts, and could not bear to see me miserable. 'Oh,' I heard them say, 'that must be the father or mother come to look for their child ; it would be cruel to keep

the poor little things from one another.' So saying, they opened the sky-light and the door of the cage, and Martin and I were together once more. Ah!" (and here the Swallow wiped his bright round eyes with one wing), "it makes me nearly cry now when I think of their delight on the stack when I brought back Martin in safety to them. On we flew after that adventure until we reached the sea-side. The children had never seen the sea before, and could not understand how such a lot of water had got into one place. They thought it must have rained for a long time, and were delighted to see it, for they were so thirsty. But on putting their little beaks down to the waves, oh, what a splutteration and noise they made! The water was salt, and they did not like it. After flying for some time over the sea, and amusing ourselves by watching the fish swimming about, and the large porpoises rolling up and down, we all got very tired, and might have fallen into the water and been drowned, had I not seen a vessel sailing along, on to the rigging of which we all settled and clung. For a long time we stayed there fast asleep, we were so tired out, and neither the sailors, or cats, or anything else hurt

us. At last we were awakened by a hot bright sun shining down upon us, and warming us through and through. On opening our eyes, we saw the sky was all blue, like a hedge-sparrow's egg, with tall green trees, and lovely flowers growing here and there, not very far from us. We twittered and chirped a good deal, to let the sailors know we were bidding them farewell, and then away we flew to the bright land. Oh, how blue the water was, and how it danced and sparkled in the sunlight ! When we got on to the land, how sweet and delicious the flowers were ! and did not we get lots of little fat flies, and all sorts of good things to eat !”

“Have you brought your children back with you ?” asked the sick child.

“No ; they have grown too strong and old to care to be any longer with me. They are now building nests for themselves somewhere, and by and by they will have to fly away to the far-off land with their little children ; but I and my wife mean to build our nest again close to your windows, so that you may watch us. We have come back this long way on purpose to be near you.”

“How good of you, dear Swallow !” murmured

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the child; "but have you not something more to tell me,—something that I may dream about to-night? Were there no sick children there? Was everybody well and happy?"

"Oh! no," answered the Swallow; "there was sickness and sorrow, even in that bright land. I will tell you about a little boy I saw there. He lived in a beautiful house, close to a large river; and he had carriages and horses, and servants waiting upon him; but he could not enjoy anything. He could only lie flat on his back; or, if he tried to walk, he had to use two sticks. They called him a cripple; and I heard them say that when he was a baby he had fallen and hurt himself, and would never be well. I used to watch them every day carrying him into his carriage, and a lady and gentleman sat beside him. He used to stroke their hands with his little thin ones, and smile so lovingly at them; but I noticed, when he came back from his drive, he looked so pale and weary, and would ask to be put upon his couch, and have the 'good book' read to him. Each day he seemed to me to grow paler and paler, and thinner and thinner; and at last he begged them not to take him out in the carriage any more,



but just to wheel him in his chair out into the garden. I had been watching him one evening for some time, when suddenly he noticed me, and, leaning forward, pointed me out to the lady beside him ; and I heard him say—‘ Look at the swallow, mamma ! When he flies home to old England, may I follow him ? I am tired and weary of this hot Italy. Let us go home.’ Then the poor lady cried ; but after a little, she spoke to him so beautifully about a home where he was going to, not away over the sea, but high up above the stars, and the sun, and the moon. Such a bright, happy land ! And the boy’s face looked so radiant and peaceful whilst she spoke. After a time he whispered, ‘ The “ good book ” has told me all about it, and I am so happy ! I long to go to that bright home, and be with Jesus ; and you and papa, and Ellie, must come soon.’ After that they carried him in, and laid him on his little bed ; and all that night the lady and gentleman sat beside him ; and, through the open window, I could hear him singing so softly, ‘ There is a happy land, far, far away.’ When the morning came, and I looked through the window, he was lying very still and white upon the bed, and I thought he was asleep. I

did not go again for some days ; but when I did, he was not there—he had gone to his ‘happy home.’”

“Ah ! I like that,” said the sick child. “I love to think of the better land. Good-bye, dear Swallow ; you must come again to-morrow.”

“There, Ivoe,” said Mrs Lovechick ; “now I am tired, and can tell you no more.”

“And I am tired too,” said Auntie to Blanche and Ernest.

“And I am tired too,” said grandpapa. “So good-night, Hilda and Hildebrand ; and God bless you, little darlings.”

“Twinnies,” said Uncle Robert, when they came to say good-night to him, “do you know, I think you are getting quite old enough to go to the Sunday-school. I have little boys in my class younger than Hildebrand, and I’m sure Aunt Isabel has little girls in hers younger than Hilda. Suppose I take you next Sunday, Hildebrand ; and Hilda, I will ask Aunt Isabel to take you.”

And so it was settled that every Sunday the Twins were to go to the Sunday-school with their uncle and aunt.

Aunt Isabel thought it would be better for them to go in the afternoon, as it was not so long, and as they went to church in the morning, she was so afraid of tiring the children. "Sunday," she said, "ought to be the very happiest day in all the week;" and indeed Sunday was a happy day to the Twins.

Among other presents which Uncle Robert gave them was a splendid, large Noah's ark. There were a hundred and sixty animals in it; and Noah and his wife, and sons, with their wives, all painted in yellow and red. And this was always kept for, and only brought out on, Sundays.

Another amusement Miss Sinclair made for them was printing a verse from the Bible, on a doubled piece of paper, for each; and then giving them a large pin, with which they pricked out the letters; and then, on opening the paper, they found the text all marked in little round holes on the other side. Hilda and Hildebrand enjoyed doing this very much.

In the evening Nursie always took them on her knee for a little time, and sang sweet, pretty hymns to them; and many a hymn Hilda and Hildebrand learnt in this way; and after the

singing was over, as it was Sunday, and for a great treat, the Twins always had a cup of tea with Nurse, in her own little sitting-room, and a piece of hot toast and butter.

One afternoon, when the children had finished writing their letter to dear mamma and papa in India, Nursie came into the room and said to Miss Sinclair, "As it is too cold for our Twinnies to go out this afternoon, I was wondering if I could do anything to amuse them. So I began turning over some old papers I have in my box, and I came upon this," said Nurse, holding up a little thin book. "It was their papa's, when he was quite a little boy, and many a time has the story of the blackbirds been told to him; so I am sure they would enjoy hearing it too."

"That we should, Nursie," said Hilda and Hildebrand. "May we go now, Miss Sinclair, and hear it?"

"You must put away your books first, and make the school-room tidy, dears," said Miss Sinclair; "then you may go."

"Very well," said Nursie, "I will go to my little room, and you will find me there when you can come."

It was not very long before Nurse heard the

Twins' feet pattering down the passage, then a knock at her door, and then in rushed the children, scrambling on to her knees, and nearly suffocating her with kisses.

"Oh, deary, dear ! Master Hildebrand, you are almost choking me ; and as for you, Miss Hilda, what with your squeezings and huggings and kissings, you are quite spoiling my best collar, knocking my cap half off my head, and making a regular old fright of me. Suppose, dears, we kiss again by and by, and in the meantime I read you papa's story, which grandmamma used to read to him when he was your age, dears."

"Oh, please do, Nursie !" And now the children were quite quiet.

"Well," said Nursie, putting on her spectacles, "it is about 'The Two Blackbirds and their four young ones—Pick, Peck, Flap, and Flit.'"

Once upon a time two beautiful blackbirds built themselves a snug nest in a tree not very far from a school-room window, where a little boy and girl had fed them, and the robins, and the sparrows, and lots of other little birds, all the winter. It was to show that they loved the kind children, and trusted them, and felt sure they

would not go prying into their nest, pinching the eggs with their silly fingers till they cracked them, or frightening the young ones until they made them tumble out of their nest, that the blackbirds built their little home so close to this window. They had been very, very busy building, and it had cost them a great deal of labour and trouble to get it so comfortable,—they had had to fly about everywhere to find straw and horse-hairs, and the little bits of wool that the sheep leave upon the hedges ; now it was finished, and oh ! they were so pleased and delighted.

“ Dear Mrs Blackbird,” said Mr Blackbird to his wife (for they were very polite to one another), “ will you step into your mansion, and see whether there is any improvement you would like me to make ; or are you perfectly satisfied with it ? ”

Up flew Mrs Blackbird on to the branch where the nest was built, and she did look so happy and pleased : hop, hop, hop, and she hopped right into it, and there she sat.

“ Well, how do you like it ? ” sang the Blackbird.

“ Like it ! ” she answered. “ Oh ! it is the pleasantest, dearest little nest I have ever had ;

indeed, I am so comfortable and happy here, it will be some little time before I leave it."

"Well, dear Mrs Blackbird, it was made for you; so stay there as long as you like;" and he kissed her with his yellow bill on the point of hers, and flew away to go and look for some breakfast for both of them.

One morning when they awoke, Mr Blackbird said, "I feel something in the nest, Mrs Blackbird; I'm quite sure it is an egg."

"And so do I," said Mrs Blackbird, "feel two or three somethings; I'm certain they must be eggs."

"Oh, do jump up quickly," asked the Blackbird, "that I may look;" and, when Mrs Blackbird flew off, there, to their great delight, they beheld, filling all the soft bottom of the nest, four lovely speckled eggs. Oh! how happy the little birds were. Mrs Blackbird flew on to the nest again, and spread her wings out so as to keep the eggs quite warm and snug.

"I feel so affected with happiness," said she, "that I cannot sing; but do you, dear Mr Blackbird, cheer me up with one of your pleasant songs."

Then the Blackbird drew near to her, and

drawing himself up to his full height, he opened his bill, and poured forth such a loud, clear, triumphant strain, that many people as they passed by stopped, and said to one another, "Hark ! listen to the blackbird ; how splendidly he sings !"

For a good many days Mrs Blackbird sat upon the nest, scarcely ever leaving the eggs, she was so afraid lest the naughty idle cuckoo should come and put in one of her own eggs, throwing away one from the nest so as to make room for it.

One fine morning Mrs Blackbird peeped at the eggs,—for she had for some time heard some queer little noises, and thought it was like the crackling of egg-shells,—and sure enough there were four curious naked-looking little things lying where the eggs had been. Their heads were large, and great eyes sticking out, only they were closed, and on their bodies they had not a single feather. They were not one bit pretty, but their mamma thought them beautiful ; and she called out to their papa, "Dear Mr Blackbird, come here quickly, and look at these lovely, lovely little creatures."

"What is it you want, my dear ?" sang the



Blackbird, flying close to the nest. "What is it I am to look at?"

"Wait one moment and I will show you."

Then Mrs Blackbird raised up one wing very carefully, and let Mr Blackbird look. There he saw the four little funny things, who all opened their yellow little morsels of bills very wide, and said, "Peep, peep, peep, peep."

"Well, they are indeed beauties," he sang. "Now, I must go and find some breakfast for you all," and off he went.

Now, not very far from the nest was a heap of earth, and in this earth there lived a family of large worms. These worms were terribly afraid of the blackbirds, for they had such strong bills, and such quick eyes, that if they saw a poor long worm, a great distance off, and if it had got ever so far into its hole, the blackbirds would pull it out. On this very morning the old worms called their children together, and said, "Now, dears, listen to us. Don't stir from the house this morning until we tell you, for there are two wicked blackbirds near here, who will eat you up, bones and all! and never think so much of saying by your leave, or with your leave, or beg your pardon, sir; but will just swallow you down

in one moment ; so take advice, and don't move from here until we say you may." The poor little worms wriggled about with terror and dismay, and all promised, except one, to do as they were bid. Now this was a very naughty, disobedient, bad child ; he was always doing what he ought not to do,—teasing his brothers and sisters, disobeying his parents, and keeping them in a continual state of alarm about him. He would go out to walk without ever telling them where he was going, or that he was going ; and then when he returned home late in the evening, and his father and mother would scold him for his conduct, he would just wriggle his long head up and down in the air, turn up his nose, which made him look very ugly, and say, "Oh, my dear parents, I pray you will be quite easy about me ; I am quite able, I assure you, to take care of myself, so please do not trouble your poor old empty heads about me." Was not this a sad way for him to speak to those who had always been so kind to him ? It showed what a selfish, hard-hearted worm he was, and you will presently hear how he was punished, and what a sad, sad fate his was. Whilst his parents were speaking to their children, and telling them about the

blackbirds, he pretended to be asleep all the time, but the very moment they had finished talking, and had gone away to another part of the house, up he jumped, saying, "Catch me staying here all day, just to please that nervous old lady and gentleman who have the honour of calling themselves my father and mother ; I'm off to see the old Mole over the way, who has always lots of capital stories to tell me, and who says he never sees any blackbirds, or birds of any sort about, and that papa and mamma are exceedingly nervous and stupid, but that they are getting old, so that it is not exactly their faults. Now, who will come with me ?" but none of them answered or moved.

"Well, good-bye, little cowards. Tell the old people when you see them that I hope to be back some time before morning !"

Foolish, silly worm ! never more was he to return to his kind parents or gentle brothers and sisters. Mr Blackbird had been standing for some time on this heap of earth, watching for something to appear, and the very moment naughty Lankey, the disobedient worm, popped his head out of the mould, that moment did the Papa Blackbird pounce upon him, pull him out

with his strong bill, and flew off with him to the nest, where he and Mrs Blackbird ate him for their breakfast. The old worms, and the young ones, sat up for him all that night, but as he never appeared that day, or the next day, or the day after that, they felt sure poor naughty Lankey must have been eaten by the birds, and all wept over his sorrowful end.

Now, I must tell you of an accident which very nearly befell the little birds in the nest. Staying with the little boy and girl, who had fed the birds all the winter, and who would never do anything to tease or hurt an animal, was a little cruel boy, called Tom, who never could see a bird's nest without going and meddling with the eggs, or pulling the poor little young ones about, often frightening the poor old birds so much that they were afraid to return to their homes. One afternoon, this naughty boy, who had seen the Blackbird's nest, with the young ones in it, from the school-room window, and who had promised little Edith and Charlie he would not climb the tree to look at them, waited till he was alone, and his little friends busy playing in the garden; then he ran down-stairs, went out-of-doors, straight up to the tree, and after staring

at the nest for some time, began to throw stones at the two old birds to frighten them. When he saw them fly away, he began to climb the tree, "for now," he thought, "I can look at the young ones, and I will take one out and throw it up in the air to see if it can fly." Very close, indeed, he had got to the nest, and was just leaning forward his naughty head to look in, when he heard Charlie say, "Oh, papa, do come. Edith and I can hear the blackbirds making such distressed sounds; we are sure some one is teasing them, and Tom promised he would not." "I will soon see," said their papa. This frightened Tom so much, that he commenced sliding down the tree as fast as he could, but in his hurry, his trousers caught on a little standing-out branch, and there he was, suspended in the air! before Edith and Charlie, and their papa.

"You very naughty cruel boy," said Colonel Grey, "you deserve to remain there for some time for your cruelty, and for having told an untruth." In his struggles to get off, the branch cracked, and down fell Tom on his face and hands into a large bed of nettles, which stung him so dreadfully that he cried out with pain. "Ha! you naughty boy, you deserve your

punishment. Now, go home to your father and mother, and tell them," said Colonel Grey, "that I will not have a cruel and untruthful boy playing with my children." Edith and Charlie cried on account of Tom's punishment, but he had to go.

Mr and Mrs Blackbird saw and heard how naughty, cruel Tom had been punished, and felt quite sure no one else would come and torment them; so they were perfectly happy and peaceful. Every day the little birds grew larger and more covered with fluff, for they were not exactly feathers yet; and oh! they were such hungry little birds, always opening their mouths and calling out, "Peep, peep," to be fed.

One morning, after the Blackbird had been feeding all the children, he said—

"Mrs Blackbird, we ought to give these little ones their names; they are quite old enough now to have a name each."

"Well," said their mamma, "I am quite sure this boy here (pointing to one of them) should be called Pick, for he always so quickly picks the worms or flies out of my bill for his breakfast."

"Then, if he is called Pick," said their father, "I am quite sure this one here (stirring up a fat,

fussy young one with his bill) should be called Peck, for he is constantly giving his brother and sisters little pecks, and sometimes even gives little pecks at me when I am feeding him."

"Yes, that's a capital name," said Mrs Blackbird; "and now, what shall we call these two?"

"They are girls, are they not?" sang Papa Blackbird.

"Yes, I think so," answered mamma; "but what to call them I cannot think."

"Well, it's very puzzling, indeed; but I will tell you what I will do. I'll go off at once to my friend Mr Crow, of Crowfoot Hall, who lives in the Elm Tree in the Avenue. He is a very clever bird, and is a good deal more in society than we are; so, will be more in the way of hearing names than either you or I."

"What a dear clever thing you are," whispered Mrs Blackbird gently (for the little ones were going to sleep, and she did not want to awake them, for they would immediately have asked for something to eat if they awoke); "do please go off at once."

Away the blackbird flew to the tree where dwelt the old crow. "Who's there?" asked the crow. "Only me," said the blackbird, very

gently (for he was rather afraid of the great, large, black, cawing crow).

"Oh, how d'ye do—how d'ye do, Mr Blackbird?" croaked out the crow. "I have got a very bad cold, and am rather hoarse. Won't you shake hands with me?"

Now, if there was anything the poor blackbird disliked, it was having to shake hands with the old crow, and I will tell you why. The crow was very much stronger and heavier than Mr Blackbird, and he was very full of mischief. So, his great delight was to put out his great foot, with long sharp claws at the end, to the poor blackbird, and catching hold of his little black foot, would shake it, and scratch it, and hold it so long, that poor little papa would quite lose his balance, having to stand on one leg, and go tumbling and fluttering off the tree. After squeezing the poor little blackbird's foot until he made his eyes water, and his bill get quite red with the pain, he left off,—for he too was getting rather tired of standing on one leg,—and asked what the blackbird wanted with him.

"To tell you the truth," sang the blackbird, "I have got four children, two boys and two girls. My wife and I have named the boys, but



we cannot find names for the girls, and I thought that you, who are so much more amongst people than I am, would perhaps kindly tell me of two pretty names—girls' names remember, not boys'."

"Ho! ho!" cawed the old crow, "that's it, is it? Well, now, suppose you shake hands with me once more. I want to show you how pleased I am that you have got four children."

"Oh!" sighed the poor blackbird to himself, "what a cruel old bird-trap he is; how I do wish I never had come to him. My poor foot quite aches yet with the horrible grip he gave me. I will give him the other this time." So the other poor little foot was held out, which the wicked old crow, I cannot say took hold of, but grabbed hold of! clawed hold of! and then shook and shook, and twisted and twirled, and tugged and wrenched; that after having hopped up and down on the branch on one foot, sometimes tumbling on one side of the bough and then on the other, Mr Blackbird, with a loud flap of his wings, fell fluttering half-way down the tree.

"My dear fellow, I have just thought of a name for one of your little girls; you flapped your wings so prettily just now, call her Flap!"

"Yes, that will do very nicely," sang the blackbird; "Good-bye, I will just go and tell my wife."

"Wait a moment," cawed the old crow; what a hurry you are in; you might just shake hands with me once more, and say good-bye in a proper and respectful manner." But the blackbird knew better, and flew away as quickly as he could.

"Mr Blackbird, Mr Blackbird—I say, *Mis-ter* Blackbird," cawed out the wicked old crow, "if I were you, I would call my other little girl 'Flit,'" and so he did; and Mrs Blackbird thought Flap and Flit very pretty names, and that the crow must be a very clever bird to have thought of them; but the Papa Blackbird did not tell her of the terrible shaking his poor little feet had had, for he knew it would make her sorry, and that the crow had done it in fun; but I don't like that sort of fun, nor think it fun to do anything to pain or vex another.

So dear little children, who are listening to this story, promise me you will never, for the sake of having some fun, do anything that would hurt any person or any animal, or that you would not like done to yourself.

One afternoon when Edith and Charlie were working in their gardens—for they had each such a nice little garden of their very own—they heard the two blackbirds making a great chirping and twittering, and saw them flying round and round their nest. On running to see what was the matter, they discovered that one of the little birds had tumbled out of its little home, and was lying on the ground, every now and then opening its poor little bill as if gasping for breath.

“O Charlie!” said little Edith, looking nearly ready to cry, “what are we to do? I do very much fear this poor little bird will die.”

“Oh, no; don’t say so. Edith, look here, I will climb the tree, and you pick up poor little birdie and hand it to me.” No sooner said than done; and very soon the blackbirds, to their great delight, saw their dear little child put back in its nest again.

Now, this child was Miss Flit; she was a most inquisitive little bird, and wanted always to creep to the side of the nest and peep over, that she might watch her papa and mamma catching the flies and picking up the worms; and although they had often warned her that she would some

day fall out and break her neck, she never would believe them.

However, after this, she never disobeyed her parents again; and she and her brothers and sister grew up to be beautiful, dutiful birds; and one fine day, when Edith and Charlie peeped at the nest from the school-room window, they saw that the blackbirds and their children had flown away.

"Is it quite finished, Nursie? Is there no more?" exclaimed the children, when Nurse stopped.

"No, dears, there is no more, and I am rather glad of it, for I'm just a little tired."

"Are you, dear Nursie?" said Hildebrand. "Oh, how sorry I am; here, Twinnie, shall we undress her and put her to bed?"

"No, no, thank you, dears," said Nursie, laughing. "Suppose now, as it is finer, we go out for a good long walk. We can watch the people skating for a little; and to-morrow, if there is enough snow, we must make a snow man and a snow house."

"What fun!" said Hilda and Hildebrand.

When they were returning from their walk,

they met Uncle Robert, who told them to-morrow they must help him to decorate the house and church with holly, as it was Christmas-eve.

"Christmas-eve !" said the children ; "will the day after to-morrow be Christmas-day ? O Nursie ! why did not you and Miss Sinclair tell us so ?"

"Because, my Twinnies, I asked them not, said Uncle Robert. "I wanted us to have a little talk quite by ourselves about it."

"To-night, when Nursie has dressed you, I will come for you, and take you both into my room."

Exactly at seven o'clock, Uncle Robert came to their door and carried the Twins off ; and if you are anxious to know what he talked to them about, I will tell you another time ; but I must just say this, that before they left his room, Uncle Robert and his little nephew and niece knelt down, whilst he prayed—oh ! so earnestly—that just as on that long-ago Christmas-day the Lord Jesus had come down from on high, and become a little helpless baby for their sakes, so He would now enter into the hearts of these two little children, taking up His abode

there, filling them with love, joy, and peace, and helping them by the power of His blessed Spirit, to be His faithful soldiers and servants, and to become like Him—holy, harmless, and undefiled.

THE END.



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